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BHAKTI PURUṢOTTAMA SWAMI

Damodara

KĀRTTIKA Vrat

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Damodara

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DĀMODARA
Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami

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BHAKTI PURUṢOTTAMA SWAMI

Damodara

KĀRTTIKA *Vrata*

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my dear Guru Maharaja His Holiness Jayapataka Swami Maharaja, who has led our ISKCON movement in developing this most beneficial practice of following Dāmodara-Vrata during the month of Kartik. This practice has benefited thousands of practicing devotees and many newcomers.

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(Photos by Vṛndāvan Lila Dāsi)

Preface

paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge

"To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium."

(Bhagavad-gītā 4.8)

From the above statement of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is understood that the Lord incarnates in each *yuga* for protecting His devotees, annihilating the demons and re-establishing *dharma*. But our Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* have stated that there is a higher purpose for the advent of the Lord in this material world. According to them, the three reasons given above are secondary reasons.

As stated in scripture:

mad-bhaktānāṁ vinodārthaṁ
karomi vividhāḥ kriyāḥ

"I perform different pastimes in this world to give pleasure to my devotees."

(Padma Purāṇa)

tathā paramahaṁsānāṁ
munīnām amalātmanām
bhakti-yoga-vidhānārthaṁ
kathaṁ paśyema hi striyaḥ

"You Yourself descend to propagate the transcendental science of devotional service unto the hearts of the advanced transcendentalists and mental speculators, who are purified by being able to discriminate between matter and spirit. How, then, can we women know You perfectly?"

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.20)

As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.36):

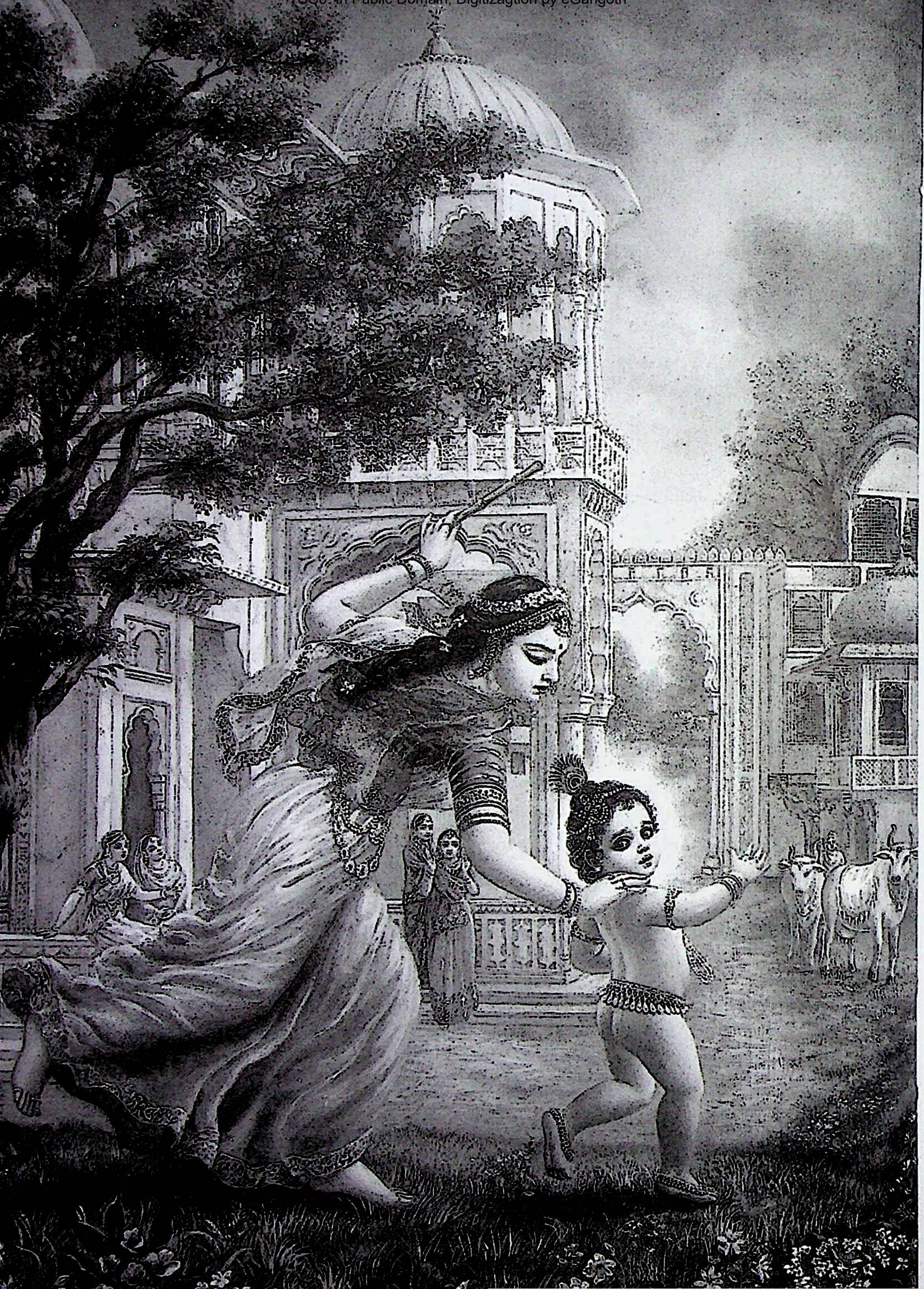
anugrahāya bhaktānāṁ
mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ
bhajate tādṛśīḥ krīḍā
yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet

"Lord Kṛṣṇa descends apparently as a human being, and He exhibits His transcendental pastimes in Vṛndāvana so that the conditioned soul may be attracted to hearing His transcendental activities."

From the above references it is understood that the purpose of the Lord's advent is to attract people by His transcendental pastimes.

It is true that people will naturally be attracted to the Lord when they hear of His wonderful pastimes, but they may need the key of understanding, given by the *ācāryas*, to unlock this great treasure.

In general, the world and its religions believe that God has no form. Even in Hinduism, this concept of a formless God is very strong. If you say God has no form then it is easily accepted, because formlessness is seen as something



extraordinary. Ordinary people have a form, but God is extraordinary, therefore He must have no form. People readily accept this concept. Those who do accept the personal aspect of God, more easily accept Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa as God. It is easy for people to accept the extraordinary form of Lord Viṣṇu as God. He has four hands, a blue body and is lying on a serpent in the ocean of milk, or residing in Vaikuṇṭha, etc. But when it comes to accepting Lord Rāma or Lord Kṛṣṇa as God, many questions and doubts seem to arise in the mind. The Lord in these forms has exhibited many extraordinary feats as well as very common activities, which lead people to doubt whether Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are really God or not. For example, the seemingly worldly behavior of Lord Rāmacandra when He was banished to the forest and His wife was stolen by Rāvaṇa. Lord Rāma was lamenting and crying for His wife. This apparent contradiction is also prevalent in the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As a child, He was afraid of the stick in His mother's hand, He stole butter in different houses, He danced with the wives of other men in the middle of the night, etc. By hearing of these seemingly common activities, some people begin to doubt that Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are actually God. How can God have all these qualities when He is transcendental to material qualities? *Param brahma,* God, has unlimited good qualities. But there are eighteen qualities that God does not possess, for example:

The *śāstras* name eighteen principal faults that are never present in the Lord: illusion, laziness, error, cruelty, intense lust, fickleness, arrogance, envy, violence, sorrow, fatigue, dishonesty, anger, longing, fear, confusion, partiality, and dependency on others.

Though these qualities are not supposed to be within God, we see in the many pastimes of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa that some these qualities are exhibited by the Lord. How can we reconcile this?

If we simply read scripture, we cannot understand. We will become more bewildered by the pastimes of God, and as a result the purpose of the Lord's advent will have failed. The Lord appears to exhibit His pastimes by which people will be attracted to Him, but in reality we see that simply by hearing about His pastimes many doubts begin to surface. To fully grasp the nectar of the Lord's pastimes, we must hear them explained by the *ācāryas*.

By paying careful attention to the explanations given by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, all doubts will be dispelled and it will become clear that the qualities which seem to disqualify the Lord as God are actually wonderful qualities which enhance His greatness.

Through this description of the *dāma-bandhana-līlā* we will explore this great secret.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has described this special pastime of *dāma-bandhana* in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in great ecstasy. Moreover, our great Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* have given insightful commentaries on this topic which provide greater clarity and sweetness. The *dāma-bandhana* pastime chapter of this book includes the commentaries of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has also very wonderfully described this pastime of binding Kṛṣṇa in his book *Gopāla-campū*. I have added some of that description as it has been translated by His Holiness Bhānu Swami. While I was about to finish compiling this chapter, I came across a lecture given by His Holiness Rādhā-Govinda Goswami Mahārāja, which has been published in a small book. Upon reading that book I discovered further interesting descriptions and could not help but include them. Thus this book is a combination of various nectarean commentaries of some of our great *ācāryas*.

While describing this sweet *dāma-bandhana* pastime of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has very eloquently described the greatness of the love of mother Yaśodā. I have placed this description in a separate article as it touches on deeper philosophical points. During this pastime of *dāma-bandhana*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhibits numerous qualities that are not meant to be manifest in the Lord. Our great *ācāryas* have perfectly reconciled these apparent contradictions, and I have included their explanations in the article entitled, "How can Kṛṣṇa be God?" I am sure readers will find this article very interesting.

Lately, the performance of Dāmodara-vrata within ISKCON has become very popular. My Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Jayapatākā Swami, has introduced and promoted this Dāmodara-vrata month as a great tool for preaching. Our temple and congregation devotees are taking full advantage of this auspicious period for practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness with more dedication and also for increasing their preaching to newcomers. For this reason, I felt the need to elaborate on this pastime and make it more readily available to everyone. This book also includes some pastimes glorifying the Dāmodara month as they are described in the *Skanda Purāṇa.* There are many descriptions of the glories of the Dāmodara-vrata or Kārttika-vrata given in various *Purāṇas* which have been compiled by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in his book *Hari-bhakti-Vilāsa.* I have also included this information to inform devotees of the greatness of Dāmodara-vrata. There are some pastimes which advocate the very strict performance of Dāmodara-vrata. I have mentioned these, not necessarily for devotees to follow but rather to illustrate the greatness of the *vrata.* For our ISKCON devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda has given a specific standard which should be observed diligently, but if someone has a desire to follow an extra *vrata* without disturbing his or her daily temple service then it is up to that particular devotee.

I would like to beg all readers of this book to kindly pray for me so that I might receive the mercy of Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara. Please excuse me if I have committed any mistakes in compiling this book. Finally I would like to thank His Holiness Bhānu Swami who very kindly made some corrections to the article describing the binding of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Your humble servant
Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami

Section

ONE

1

Damodara Lila

Ākarṣayati iti kṛṣṇaḥ. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive. The scriptures describe that Lord Brahmā has fifty qualities. Each and every living entity possesses a part of these fifty qualities of Brahmā. Lord Śiva has five more qualities than Brahmā, giving him a total of fifty-five qualities. Lord Nārāyaṇa has five more qualities than Lord Śiva, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supreme, having extra four qualities that are unique only to Him. These four qualities are *rūpa-mādhurī*, *līlā-mādhurī*, *veṇu-mādhurī* and *premṇā priyādhikya*. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is most famous for His incredibly sweet pastimes. In fact Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa displays unlimited nectarean pastimes which attract every living entity. He is so beautiful that He becomes attracted by His own beauty. His beauty has thus been described as *ātma-paryanta sarva-citta-hara*, which means He is so attractive that He attracts the hearts of everybody, including even His own heart.

Among the unlimited pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa His *dāma-bandhana* pastime is very unique. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has described this pastime in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in great ecstasy and many Gauḍīya *ācāryas* have given a variety of beautiful purports on this description. The following article has been prepared on this *dāma-bandhana* pastime, based on the description in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the commentary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the commentary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and from the description in *Gopāla-campū*. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī begins his description of the pastime of binding Kṛṣṇa by mother Yaśodā, by using the first word "*ekadā*."

"ekadā gṛha-dāsīṣu yaśodā nanda-gehinī"

Dāmodara

In Sanskrit, *dā* means time. It is used in words like *sarvadā, ekadā, yadā, kadā*. *Ekadā* means "at one time," *yadā* means "at some time," *kadā* means "at which time," and *sarvadā* means "at all times." As mentioned, "*ekadā*" means at one time, or once upon a time, but when is this "once upon a time"?

This pastime of Lord Kṛṣṇa took place when He was in Gokula Mahāvana. We know that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in Gokula Mahāvana as son of mother Yasoda, in the house of Nanda Mahārāja. According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa remained there in Gokula for three years and four months. Following this period, Nanda Bābā moved to a place on the western bank of the Yamunā called Chatikarā in Vṛndāvana. Again, the Lord stayed there for three years and four months. From there Nanda Bābā moved to Dig, then Kāmyavana and finally settled at Nanda-grāma. During His stay at these various places, the Lord exhibited many wonderful pastimes. This particular pastime took place while the Lord was in Gokula Mahāvana before He was three years and four months old. After this pastime, Nanda Bābā along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and their associates left Gokula Mahāvana.

This pastime took place during the month of Kārttika, also known as the Dāmodara month. The day was Dīpāvalī *amāvasyā* day, just before the day of Govardhana-pūjā. Of course, at that time Govardhana-pūjā had not yet been introduced. The Vraja-vāsīs were holding a big festival to worship Indradeva. Everyone, including all the servants of the house, was engaged in preparing for that Indra-pūjā festival. All the *gopīs* were preparing the huge amount of butter needed for this festival.

On this day, in the early morning, the joyful mother Yaśodā saw that Kṛṣṇa was sleeping with closed eyes, which were as beautiful as blue lotuses. Caressing Him gently with her hand as He lay on the bed, she let Him sleep. Slowly leaving His bedside, she left the room, quickly tying up her cloth to engage in the morning household chores which started with churning yogurt. On that day, Rohiṇī mounted a chariot with Balarāma and went to the house of Upananda, having received a special invitation.

Mother Yaśodā engaged herself in churning buttermilk for her darling Kṛṣṇa. Her love for Kṛṣṇa was so great that she could not bear the thought of her maidservant making butter for her dearest son. This was a service that only she could perform, out of her deep affection for Kṛṣṇa. She was also thinking, "My son is always stealing butter from the houses of the other *gopīs*. Therefore I must make such tasty butter, that after eating the butter at home He will surely stop His stealing. If the taste of my butter is supreme then the butter at the other houses will seem bland and tasteless." The third reason that mother Yaśodā had for wanting to make the butter herself, was that she would offer it to Lord Nārāyaṇa for the well-being of her beloved child.

Mother Yaśodā is *āśraya*, or the shelter of *prema*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya*, or the object of *prema*. Mother Yaśodā is the epitome of the parental loving relationship. Her name is Yaśodā because she gave *yaśaḥ* (fame) to Kṛṣṇa. What fame? Kṛṣṇa is famous for being controlled by His devotees. This He proved to everyone, by allowing His mother to bind Him with a rope around His belly! "*Dā*" means giver. "*Yaśaḥ*" means fame. Mother Yaśodā was the giver of *yaśaḥ* or fame to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore her name is Yaśodā. In her unique love for Kṛṣṇa, she displayed the most wonderful, parental loving mellows. Mother Yaśodā was expert in making butter. She began churning butter with great attention, from very early in the morning, while Śrī Kṛṣṇa was still fast asleep inside the room. Mother Yaśodā understood perfectly that she must churn the butter in the early morning because once Kṛṣṇa was awake, He would certainly disturb the process.

Mother Yaśodā was therefore churning butter in the courtyard while Śrī Kṛṣṇa was sleeping, and thus she was not able to see Kṛṣṇa. She was not able to see the beautiful face of Kṛṣṇa and was feeling great separation from her dear son. In order to mitigate that feeling of separation, mother Yaśodā was meditating on the various pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and reciting sweet songs describing the pastimes which He had already exhibited. These songs had been composed by herself and the other ladies of Gokula.

Mother Yaśodā sang:

"O *tilaka* of the family of Nanda! You are living in Vraja. Since the people here have performed hundreds of pious acts, You have given them great happiness. By witnessing Your activities, the eyes become joyful.

By the great festival arising from this bliss, You give bliss to all the cowherds. O king of Gokula filled with the auspicious action of killing Pūtanā!

You engaged in auspicious acts after overturning the cart, which destroyed the steadiness of our hearts. The Supreme Lord has brought you back after He killed the whirlwind demon.

You crawl about in the beautiful yard. Lotus-eyed child! You are the greatest piety. You show the greatest skill at dancing and playing.

You appear most attractive when You hold onto the calves' tails. You show false greed in arguing for fun with the elders.

O Kṛṣṇa! Always give happiness to me, your mother. Stay in this house always. Please reveal Your playful antics and quickly grow.

You showed the power of the Lord, causing astonishment, in showing the universe within You. May Your body remain without old age and death and become the cause of joy by worshiping the Lord."

Her earrings shook and jingled harmoniously. Then, her ankle bells and the golden belt around her waist also joined in, creating a beautiful melodious sound. It was as if an expert *karatāla* player was playing. As she was churning the yogurt, the churning rod went "*gharad gharad gharad*," sounding like an expert *mṛdaṅga* player. In this way, mother Yaśodā had full musical accompaniment as she continued to sing about Kṛṣṇa's glorious childhood pastimes.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, overwhelmed by the great fortune of Yaśodā and being very affectionate to her, described the beauty of Yaśodā while she was churning butter. Those devotees who worship Kṛṣṇa in parental loving relationship try to remember or meditate on this form of Yaśodā while she churned butter. She is the person most qualified to be the mother of Kṛṣṇa, being the epitome of parental loving relationship due to her high level of parental love, her qualities and form. Śrīla Śukadeva describes the beauty of her body, of her dress and the beauty of the movements of her body while she churned butter for Kṛṣṇa with so much love and affection.

She was *subhrū* (having beautiful eyebrows) and *pṛthu-kaṭitaṭa* which means her waist was broad. She was wearing a very finely woven, yellow *sari*, made of fabric prepared from the fibre of the *atasī* tree. This tree is well-known for producing an extremely fine thread. Her bodily colour was *śyāma* (dark). Around her waist she wore a piece of cloth called *mekhalā*. The bracelets on her wrists moved side to side and her earrings swayed as she expertly churned butter for the Lord. Her eyebrows shifted expressively, reflecting her happiness. Due to the labour of churning butter, beads of perspiration decorated her face, and *mālatī* flowers fell to the ground from her head.

In this way she was *nirmamantha*, churning the yogurt. Her hands and body were engaged in this intensive labour, *pariśrama*, to make the *makhan* (butter). Her tongue was singing the glories and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Her ears were engaged in hearing those songs. And her mind was remembering and meditating on how she would make the *makhan* to feed Kṛṣṇa. This is the state of a perfect devotee, fully engaging mind, body and intelligence in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

As mother Yaśodā was thus engaged in churning yogurt, Kṛṣṇa woke up from His sleep.

On this day, Kṛṣṇa woke up earlier than usual. He was looking for His mother and thought, "Why is Mā not here with me on the bed?" Then He heard her singing in another room. He immediately thought, "What is wrong with her today? She is not worried about Me at all. She has left Me to start on her ordinary household duties."

He was feeling very hungry and was eager to enjoy drinking milk from His mother. Breathing heavily, stretching His limbs and rubbing His eyes, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa cried, "Mother, mother!" Hearing the sound of churning, He walked on faltering feet to His mother.

The Lord was hungry. Here the question arises, "How can *paraṁ brahma*, who is *ātmārāma* or self-satisfied, be hungry?" *Paraṁ brahma* is supposed to be self-satisfied. But here the Lord felt hungry and desired to drink milk from mother Yaśodā. This hunger was not like the hunger of ordinary people. This hunger was the hunger for love. This hunger has manifested within the Lord as an expression of parental loving relationship. The Lord wanted to give pleasure to mother Yaśodā.

Mother Yaśodā enjoyed seeing her baby approaching her with a desire to drink milk. To indicate His great desire to drink her milk, the Lord was sobbing as He made His way towards Yaśodā who was engaged in churning yogurt. He then caught hold of the churning rod and stopped His mother from churning yogurt, expressing His desire, "Oh, mother! Please stop churning yogurt now and feed Me milk."

One *ācārya* has given his realization as to why Kṛṣṇa stopped the churning. He stopped this churning to tell His mother, "All the *jñānīs* are constantly reading and analyzing the scriptures, trying to extract the essence, just churning, churning and churning. At last they may approach Me, for it is I who am the conclusion of all scriptures. Oh, My dear mother, you are already with Me, so what is the use of all this churning?"

We can analyze the *Upaniṣads*, the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, and the other Vedic scriptures. But what is their final conclusion? All the scriptures conclude that attaining Kṛṣṇa is the highest goal of life. That Kṛṣṇa is the son of mother Yaśodā. Why then would she have to do any churning? Why was she doing this unnecessary labour? For this reason, Kṛṣṇa stopped His mother from churning the yogurt.

Mother Yaśodā was pleased to see how her son had become so strong and intelligent that He was trying to stop her by holding the churning rod. This increased her meditation on the qualities of Kṛṣṇa and captured her mind. Just by seeing Kṛṣṇa approaching her, torrents of milk began to flow from her breast due to her extreme parental love. In His eagerness, Kṛṣṇa climbed onto the lap of Yaśodā before she could pick Him up. Kṛṣṇa did not need to be invited onto the lap of mother Yaśodā, as the lap of Yaśodā was Kṛṣṇa's own property.

He also became very proud of Himself. He thought to Himself, "How smart I am. I stopped mother from her work and claimed My right." Thinking in this way, He smiled continuously, making His chubby cheeks more adorable. After climbing onto His mother's lap, Kṛṣṇa began drinking the milk from her breast, which poured forth in excess due to her deep affection. Indeed, there was no need for Kṛṣṇa to suck the breast of mother Yaśodā, as her milk flowed so freely. Kṛṣṇa was certainly fortunate, as He could not consume the volume of milk produced by the love of His mother. When the milk flowed from Yaśodā like monsoon rains, Kṛṣṇa was like a *cātaka* bird drinking those showers. Milk was overflowing from His mouth and onto His cheeks. Mother Yaśodā happily fed her dear son in this way while absorbed in meditation on the beautiful blue face of the Lord, decorated with attractive white rivulets of her milk.

As Kṛṣṇa drank mother Yaśodā's breast milk, a transcendental competition began, Kṛṣṇa's belly would not become satisfied and mother Yaśodā's milk would not stop flowing due to her intense affection. The milk was endeavoring to completely satisfy Kṛṣṇa but Kṛṣṇa can never be satiated with any amount of *prema*. So the milk continued to flow and Kṛṣṇa continued to drink. In this way she continued feeding Him for a good long while, again becoming fully engrossed and losing all sense of time.

The stove for heating the milk was not far from mother Yaśodā and she suddenly realised that the milk was boiling over and falling into the fire. In her desire to prevent the fire from consuming the pot of precious milk, mother Yaśodā placed Kṛṣṇa on the ground and quickly ran to the stove. She wasn't able to carry Kṛṣṇa as she had to move extremely fast and feared dropping her darling son, who had not finished drinking her milk and was certainly not yet satisfied.

One may question, how can mother Yaśodā leave Kṛṣṇa like this, depriving Him of her milk? Yaśodā is the epitome of *vātsalya-rasa*. Her love for Kṛṣṇa knows no limits. She is the spotless example of love for her child. However, she still left Him, just to save a little milk! Was there a lack of milk in her house? Nanda Mahārāja had 900.000 cows. They must have given so much milk! Just to save a little milk on the stove, how could mother Yaśodā leave her most darling child on the ground, causing Him so much distress? She left Kṛṣṇa to save the milk because this milk was very special and meant for the service of Kṛṣṇa. Yaśodā loved Kṛṣṇa so much that she would select special cows from the herds and take care of them personally, feeding them the best grasses, to produce the sweetest milk. Yaśodā would personally milk those cows and carefully boil the milk to feed Kṛṣṇa. Her worry was that if this milk was spoiled, then what would her beloved Kṛṣṇa drink? Having this higher principle of serving Kṛṣṇa in mind, mother Yaśodā made the difficult decision to leave Him on the ground, even before He had finished relishing her milk.

In this regard the *Gopāla-campū* describes: "His parents thought, 'This is my son' and from birth had possessiveness with complete disregard for their own bodies and house. Brahmā has said the following concerning all the people of Vraja, what to speak of His parents:

"So what is left for You to give these devotees of Vṛndāvana, whose homes, wealth, friends, dear relations, bodies, children and very lives and hearts are all dedicated only to You?"

Since the milk and yogurt were for Kṛṣṇa, they were even more attractive than Kṛṣṇa. This is the special nature of her love.

This was her way of thinking. Enduring great difficulties, she was not aware of her household chores that should be done. She thought more of Kṛṣṇa as her son than her body and house. Making Kṛṣṇa the object of her compassion, she thought that her duty was to serve Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa also understood that her scolding and punishment were her show of affection. What more can be said of her affectionate caring for Him?

On this point, our *ācāryas* have made a comparison between Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra, and mother Yaśodā. Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra fought with Kṛṣṇa, who, being the Supreme Personality of Godhead was simply enjoying wrestling with them. Thus Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra were giving pleasure (the pleasure of wrestling) to the Lord by fighting with Him. On the other hand, mother Yaśodā made the Lord dissatisfied and angry by leaving Him on the ground and depriving Him of her milk. It appears that Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra were pleasing the Lord and mother Yaśodā was upsetting the Lord. How is it then, that mother Yaśodā is a great devotee, and Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra were great demons?

The reason is, the Lord is always in bliss. As *paraṁ brahma* He is *ānandaṁ brahma*. He is *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt*. He is ever-blissful. He is "*āptakāma*" and thus ever-satisfied. He never feels any pain or dissatisfaction. Even when Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra were punching Him, the Lord was feeling pleasure. Similarly, when the Lord appeared in His tortoise form, the demons and demigods placed the Mandara Mountain on His back to churn the milk ocean. It appears as though this would have been a great endeavour for the Lord, but it was actually effortless for Him. The Lord was enjoying holding this great mountain and felt a pleasurable scratching sensation as the demigods and demons churned the milk ocean by rotating the huge mountain on His back. Similarly, the punching of these two demons gave pleasure to the Lord, in the form of wrestling. In fact, whatever one does to the Lord, He simply enjoys. For Him there is no suffering. He is *ānandaṁ brahma, ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt. Kevala ānanda-kāṇḍa.*

What is most important in one's interactions with the Lord, is one's consciousness. Although Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra were giving pleasure to the Lord by wrestling with Him, they were still demons due to their acting with demoniac consciousness. Their motive was not to give pleasure to the Lord, but rather to cause Him harm, reflecting an unfavourable mood or *pratikūla bhāva*. On the other hand, mother Yaśodā's act of leaving the Lord on the ground, depriving Him of drinking milk and making Him angry was done with a favourable mood and service attitude. Mother Yaśodā ran to save the milk because it was very special milk meant for Kṛṣṇa to drink. There was a higher purpose in a favourable mood of serving Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yaśodā was thinking, "If that milk is spoiled then what will my baby Kṛṣṇa drink?" Thus she had great concern for the Lord and her favourable mood was expressed in this way. As the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* says:

ānukulyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanaṁ bhaktir uttamā

Kṛṣṇa is *bhāva-grāhī* Janārdana. He accepts the *bhāva* or mood of the devotees. Thus even if outwardly it looks like Kṛṣṇa was dissatisfied and angry, still in truth He was pleased and enjoyed the parental loving relationship.

When mother Yaśodā went to take the milk off the fire she spoke to Kṛṣṇa in joy, "I worship You with *ārātrika*, but for a moment please protect the churning pot. After taking care of the milk I will come as quickly as I can." The milk overflowing from the breast of mother Yaśodā soaked through her cloth and sprinkled the floor as she ran to save the milk on the stove.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has justified the act of mother Yaśodā leaving Kṛṣṇa on the ground and running to save a little milk on the oven, stating that it in no way reflects a lessening of her affection for Kṛṣṇa. The question may arise that Nanda Mahārāja had so many cows, she had so much milk, why then should she run to save a little milk which was put on the oven and overflowing. Is her saving milk more important than feeding Kṛṣṇa? What kind of affection does she have for Kṛṣṇa?

Jīva Gosvāmī explains: Whatever wealth Nanda and Yaśodā had (their main wealth was cows and cow products) was meant for Kṛṣṇa. Yaśodā would think, "My baby son does not know how to protect wealth. I have to do it for Him." The father and mother sometimes do something to their son, which apparently causes him some distress, but which is actually beneficial for his future. Parents always work hard, tolerating the apparent suffering of their son for his future well-being. It is a very well-known fact that parents feed bitter medicine to their children for their health even though the children may not like it. In a similar way, parents also chastise their children in order to teach them the lessons they need to learn for their future. This kind of parental, loving mood of the father and mother is sometimes very difficult to understand. Being a cowherd woman, mother Yaśodā's wealth was in cow products such as milk, yoghurt and ghee. She was thinking, "My little boy does not know how to protect all these products. I must do it personally, for His welfare." In this way there was no mistake or deficit of affection when mother Yaśodā left Kṛṣṇa on the ground and ran to save the milk.

The following point has been made by various *ācāryas* in our line to explain the reason the milk would overflow and fall into the fire: The external reason could be that the milk was overflowing due to excessive heat but still there is another internal reason, which is as follows: The milk on the oven was watching Lord Kṛṣṇa drinking milk from mother Yaśodā. The milk became very worried, thinking, "If the Lord drinks too much milk from His mother then what will happen to me? What will be the use of my life? If I cannot serve the Lord then better I commit suicide." With such thoughts in its mind, the milk started to overflow and enter the fire to commit suicide.

But as mother Yasoda ran to save that special milk, the milk, out of shame, stopped boiling over and resumed its normal state. The milk now started to think that it had committed a great offense by interrupting the loving exchange between mother Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa. The milk chided itself, "What have I done? Mother Yaśodā was so happy and joyful feeding Kṛṣṇa and I impeded her devotional service. I am an offender."

As everything in the spiritual world is alive and conscious, it is quite possible for milk to feel and think in this way.

Once, Śrīla Prabhupāda told a story about mother Yaśodā cooking rice in the spiritual world. She put the rice into a pot and placed it on the stove to cook. She then went to the courtyard outside, to do some other work. This is the normal practice for ladies in India, and they will return to the kitchen from time to time to check the rice by pressing one grain between their fingers to see if it is cooked. In the spiritual world, however, there is no need for mother Yaśodā to come to the kitchen from time to time to check if the rice is cooked. Even if she is in another part of the house or courtyard, far away from the kitchen, she will simply speak to the rice from there, "Oh rice! Are you cooked?" Upon hearing the question, the rice will reply, saying whether or not it is cooked.

Thus when Kṛṣṇa was left behind on the floor by His mother, He was deprived of drinking her milk, not yet fully satisfied. Being left in this state of dissatisfaction, Kṛṣṇa became very angry. The white moons of His teeth became red like His lips. His eyes, like *cakora* birds, became filled with tears. With His two lotus hands He destroyed the yogurt pot, showing His strength.

Here we must note that Kṛṣṇa is becoming dissatisfied and angry. Neither dissatisfaction nor anger are supposed to be present in *paraṁ brahma. Paraṁ brahma* or God is *āptakāma* or ever-satisfied. As He has everything in His possession and doesn't lack anything, how can He feel dissatisfied? Since God is ever satisfied surely this is an anomaly. He also became very angry. How can God become angry? Anger arises from the mode of passion.

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: "It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.37)

Kāma and *krodha* or anger arise from the mode of passion. God is not influenced by the three modes of material nature. He is *triguṇātīta* or *nirguṇa*. How then can Kṛṣṇa, if He is God, be influenced by the mode of passion and become angry?

Our *ācāryas* have explained that Kṛṣṇa's dissatisfaction and anger are not material. Although He has everything and there is no question of Him becoming dissatisfied, He exhibits His dissatisfaction only to reciprocate with the loving mood of His mother.

Kṛṣṇa picked up a stone used for grinding spices, and while biting His lip due to excessive anger, broke the pot in which His mother was churning butter. After breaking the pot He began shedding false tears and left the place.

Here Kṛṣṇa exhibited the mood of anger to reciprocate with mother Yaśodā's parental love. Kṛṣṇa's anger was actually meant to please His mother. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not just pretending to be angry. His anger arose from the core of His heart. He manifested His internal feeling in a very solitary place inside the house of His mother. As there is no one else present there, we can conclude that the Lord revealed His real feelings. He was not performing a drama or acting, for what would be the need if there were no audience? The Lord manifested such intense emotions in reciprocation with the equally intense parental affection of His mother. This kind of pastime cannot take place anywhere else except in the courtyard of mother Yaśodā.

Kṛṣṇa shed tears, which have been described as *mṛṣāśru* or false tears by some people. Actually Kṛṣṇa's tears are *amṛṣāśru* or genuine tears. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives the explanation that because intelligent people know that Kṛṣṇa is God, they conclude that His tears are false. This may be true on some occasions but in this case the Lord's tears were genuine (*amṛṣāśru*), due to His being deprived of drinking milk to His full satisfaction.

Kṛṣṇa was very clever. While breaking the pot He was very careful and quiet. He took a small stone used for grinding and hit the pot on its bottom without making a sound. Having made a hole, all the yoghurt began flowing out onto the ground. Kṛṣṇa saw this and became fearful of consequent punishment. To avoid the wrath of His mother, the Lord quickly left the scene of the crime and fled to a solitary room to hide. Kṛṣṇa skilfully loosened the bolt of the door to enter the store room. He then climbed on a wooden bed to reach a pot of butter which was kept hanging from the ceiling. The Lord then stole the butter and fled unseen.

After subduing the milk which was overflowing from the pot, mother Yaśodā came back to the spot where she was churning butter. To her surprise she saw that the pot was broken and the contents spilled all over the floor. She could easily understand that this must be the work of none other than her son Kṛṣṇa, because she knew very well how naughty her son was. She realised that because she had left Kṛṣṇa unsatisfied, He must have done this due to His anger. She might have thought that the pot had been broken by a monkey, but when she saw the intelligent way in which the pot was broken, as well as the fact that Kṛṣṇa was not there, it was confirmation for her that Kṛṣṇa was the culprit. The cleverness of the boy in breaking the pot so quietly and His running away from there out of fear so carefully that the sound of the bangles adorning His wrists were not heard, was enough evidence for mother Yaśodā. A soft smile came to her lips and she touched her forefinger to her nose. Although mother Yaśodā was worried at first, a message from the sky caused her to smile.

The voice from the sky said, "The baby bee, being very thirsty, has not been fully satisfied with honey, and has thus broken the lotus bud. On breaking the lotus and seeing only contents flow out without honey, the bee has gone to another lotus and obtained honey. Moreover, you have shown skill on taking the milk off the fire, but you will be praised more for your ability to pacify the anger of your son."

Hearing this she smiled as she looked at His footprints of buttermilk which indicated the direction of His escape.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa was sitting in a cross-legged position on top of a grinding mortar which was kept upside down to protect it from the crows. Kṛṣṇa was taking butter from a pot, eating some butter and also feeding some to the monkeys. It is common for a small child to retaliate against his parents in some way if he feels offended or hurt by them. Kṛṣṇa perfectly displayed this propensity by destroying the churning pot and spoiling the butter. Since this was not satisfying enough for Him, He went on to distribute butter to the monkeys to really teach His mother a lesson.

Even though there was fresh *makhan* being made for Him, Kṛṣṇa started as if to eat the previous day's *makhan*. As he was doing so, He began thinking to Himself, "I will eat this *makhan* and get sick, You will have to take me out of Vraja, to a hospital in Mathurā where you will have to spend lots of money and take care of Me. I'll show you! Then you'll see. Then you'll be sorry!"

Kṛṣṇa had left the scene of the broken churning pot very quietly and carefully, thinking that mother Yaśodā would not be able to find Him. However, despite the precautions a thief may take in order to remain undetected, he normally leaves some clues. Kṛṣṇa unknowingly left some evidence which pointed to His whereabouts. When Kṛṣṇa was walking away from the place where He had broken the churning pot, He inadvertently stepped in some of the spilled butter, leaving telltale footprints indicating the direction He had taken. Moreover, mother Yaśodā was able to hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's ankle bells and the sound of butter pots being moved. She started to smile, amused by the activities of her son. Mother Yaśodā entered the yard while holding a stick, which was concealed under her cloth. Kṛṣṇa was eating while very carefully looking around out of fear that His mother may come at any moment and catch Him. He was not only looking around in fear with His eyes, but also very attentively listening with His ears. If He were to only use His eyes He could see Yaśodā only when she came in front of Him. Thus He also very carefully kept His ears alert so that before Yaśodā came in front of Him, He would be aware of her arrival just by hearing the sound of her footsteps.

But mother Yaśodā was also very careful. She approached Kṛṣṇa very slowly and quietly, without making a sound. Thus Yaśodā appeared in front of Kṛṣṇa suddenly. Kṛṣṇa, seeing His mother with a stick in her hand, could realise that the situation was very serious. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had never been approached by His mother with a stick before and so He scrutinized her every move, afraid of what might happen. Śrīla Śukadeva has used the word "*prasamīkṣya*".

Samīkṣya means "seeing." *Prasamīkṣya* means to see with more attention again and again. He looked upon His mother very attentively to see her more clearly, thinking, "I have never seen her with a stick in her hand." As soon as He realised what is the situation He immediately jumped up and started to run. It is well known that the thief has a hundred eyes whereas the owner of wealth has only two eyes.

Kṛṣṇa ran towards the main gate of the palace where two *arjuna* trees were standing. He was thinking, "If mother catches Me inside the house she will punish Me, but if I run away to the main gate where many people are walking by, I will be safe, as she will not punish Me in public."

Kṛṣṇa was running out of fear. He was running as if He was in great danger. The word *bhītavat* can have different meanings. He has no real fear but He was running like a person who had become afraid. Kṛṣṇa was running in fear of His mother just to exhibit His wonderful childhood pastimes. Even though Kṛṣṇa ran towards the gates of the palace, His mother refused to give up the chase. Kṛṣṇa, of whom Yamarāja is afraid, of whom fear personified is afraid, was seemingly running in fear from His mother. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has mentioned that the Supreme Personality of Godhead's small toe cannot be touched by the great *yogīs* who have the power to merge into Brahman by the strength of their *samādhi*. That same Lord was being chased by mother Yaśodā and was easily eluding her. This effort of mother Yaśodā surprised Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. What to speak of the great fortune of mother Yaśodā who could take care of the Lord as a baby by carrying Him on her lap and on her back. Her good fortune of running after the Lord and trying to catch Him cannot be perceived by great *yogīs*. Thus the fortunate and elevated position of mother Yaśodā among all devotees has been established here.

While mother Yaśodā was running behind Kṛṣṇa, her bundles of hair loosened and flowers fell from her hair. The *mālatī* flowers thought, "How can I sit on the head of mother Yaśodā? I should worship her lotus feet by falling to the ground." Due to her broad waist she was not able to run very fast, but still she managed to catch hold of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, who cannot be reached by the great *yogīs*, who are able to run as fast as the speed of the mind and enter into Brahman, was caught by mother Yaśodā due to her loving parental affection for Him.

While chasing Kṛṣṇa she shouted, "King of thieves! Where are you going?" While Kṛṣṇa was running away in fear of His mother, His beauty increased by His indistinct smiling and crying. At times, mother Yaśodā almost caught Kṛṣṇa, but just missed grabbing hold of Him. At one point Kṛṣṇa thought of stopping to look behind to check how far behind His mother was. As soon as Kṛṣṇa stopped to look back, mother Yaśodā quickly caught hold of His right hand from behind. Realising He had been captured, Kṛṣṇa began to cry, rubbing his eyes. He tried to cover His butter- soaked limbs by smearing Himself with dust, while looking upon mother Yaśodā with great fear.

Mother Yaśodā threatened Kṛṣṇa with the stick in her hand by raising it in the air, but did not beat Him. She chastised the Lord for His offences. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has said that usually whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa cried, His mother would wipe away His tears with her own *sari*. Kṛṣṇa expected the same reaction from His mother, but when she didn't reciprocate in the same way, He used His left hand to wipe away His own tears as His right hand was firmly held by His mother. The Lord thought, "Today she does not wipe away My tears. This must be a very serious situation."

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then rubbed His eyes to produce more tears in an attempt to invoke the compassion of His mother and avoid punishment. Mother Yaśodā chastised Him by raising her stick and saying, "Oh, restless boy (*aśānta*)! So hot-tempered (*roṣākrānta*)! O greedy boy! Monkey lover! House plunderer! From today onwards I will not give You any butter or milk products. I will keep You bound in the house. You can no longer play anywhere as You please. I will not allow any toys or playmates!" As mother Yaśodā chastised Kṛṣṇa in this way, raising her stick above Him, He looked up at her in fear. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states that mother Yaśodā not only caught hold of Kṛṣṇa, who is difficult to reach even for great *yogīs*, but she also started chastising the Lord, who has been offered prayers by great personalities like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. Mother Yaśodā caused fear in Him who is the cause of fear for Mahākāla and Yamarāja, just by raising her stick towards Him.

When mother Yaśodā saw that her son had become extremely fearful, she was worried that He might become too distressed by this fear. She quickly threw her stick aside in order to lessen His fear. But mother Yaśodā was still concerned that Kṛṣṇa learn a lesson. She didn't want Him to be untrained.

She wanted Him to become a well-mannered, good person. Due to her intense love, mother Yaśodā contemplated how to make Kṛṣṇa, who is *puruṣottama* (the best man among all men), a good human being.

This pastime demonstrates the uniqueness of Kṛṣṇa's *vraja-līlā*. In no other incarnation does the Supreme Lord await judgment from anyone. Here, Kṛṣṇa is guiltily standing in front of His mother, His fate completely in her hands, mother Yaśodā now has full jurisdiction to decide whether to punish, bind or release Kṛṣṇa. This is the specialty of the parental affection, *vātsalya-bhāva* of Vraja where the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's Godhood is covered. Śukadeva Gosvāmī then says *arbhaka-vatsalā*—seeing the genuine fear in His eyes, mother Yaśodā put her stick down and contemplated on how else to discipline her mischievous son.

Due to her intense parental loving mood, she had no knowledge of the opulence of her son, and wanted to teach Him a lesson by binding Him with a rope. Here Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has used the word "*tad-vīrya-kovidā.*" Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has given two meanings of this word. *Tad-vīrya-kovidā* and *a-tad-vīrya-kovidā. Tad-vīrya-kovidā* means, by knowing very well about His great restlessness. *A-tad-vīrya-kovida* means, by not knowing His all-pervading greatness due to her parental loving mood.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has explained that Kṛṣṇa pleaded with great fear, "My dear mother! Please do not beat Me!" Mother Yaśodā replied, "If You are so afraid of being chastised then why did You break the churning pot?" Kṛṣṇa said, "I will never do it again. Please throw away that stick." Mother Yaśodā felt apprehensive to hear her darling son speaking in this way. She thought, "Oh, today my son is feeling so perplexed." At this point she decided that the stick was no longer necessary and discarded it, but she was convinced that Kṛṣṇa needed to be taught a lesson and she was afraid that He might run away to the forest. This was due to something He had said earlier, when she had chastised Him and called Him a friend of the monkeys. At that time, Kṛṣṇa had responded, "What? You tell Me that I am a monkey? If I am a monkey then let Me go to forest. I will stay there with all the monkeys!" For this reason mother Yaśodā thought it would be a good idea to bind Kṛṣṇa, keeping Him close to her house.

In the *Gopāla-campū* this is described as follows. With a hidden smile she said, "But you are a thief. Ah! You are the king of thieves! Your father's lineage is all thieves." She asked her son, "How did the yogurt pot break?" Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "It was the Supreme Lord's stick." Mother Yaśodā asked, "Who gave butter to the monkeys?" Kṛṣṇa replied, "He who created monkeys gave it to them."

"I think that You always taste and eat the fresh ghee meant for sacrifices." After Yaśodā scolded the infant as a thief, her heart softened.

Smiling but with anger she said, "You should tell Your secret and give up Your pride." When His mother said this, Kṛṣṇa began weeping. He said, "When you ran quickly, the pot broke because of being struck by your anklets. What is My fault in this? Inspired by the Lord, the monkeys entered the house to steal. When they pulled at the butter pot, I caught it. What is My fault? Seeing you holding a stick I ran away like a thief. Seeing that I was frightened you tried to mercilessly beat Me without justice."

Yaśodā spoke with repentance, "O best of thieves with clever words! Though You are the son of the king of Vraja, You are fond of monkeys and have the nature of a monkey."

Fearful and to give fear to His mother, he said, "If I am a monkey then I will go to the forest and stay there."

His mother began to worry, thinking: "Who can understand Him? A proud child will do this. I must tie Him up to prevent it, since I am alone and cannot continue to pay attention to both the house and this child."

She then spoke aloud, "O thief who bewilders everyone with Your restless eyes! Do not think of avoiding me. After binding You up I will go to the house quickly. If You show your strength, then steal something else."

When she began tying Him up, Kṛṣṇa became so angry that he breathed with a hissing sound. He said, "Rohiṇī! Where have you gone with Balarāma? Because you are not here, My mother is binding me up. Please come quickly."

Because Rohiṇī was far away she could not hear, but other neighbouring women who had previously scolded Him, heard His cries and came. They laughed and said, "Has He done anything at your house?" They did this so that mother Yaśodā might remember what she had said to them previously. Kṛṣṇa used to steal butter in the houses of different *gopīs*. When the *gopīs* would come to Yaśodā to complain about her son stealing butter she would not believe it. She would say, "Why would my son go to steal butter in your house? Is there any lack of butter in my house?" In this way Yaśodā would discard the complaints of the *gopīs*. Today, as Yaśodā was punishing Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* were thinking, "When we complained about Kṛṣṇa she would not believe it. Today Kṛṣṇa must have done some naughty business in her house." At this point it is important to understand some of the ways Kṛṣṇa would cheat the *gopīs* when stealing butter from their houses.

One day, Kṛṣṇa along with His friends entered the house of one of the *gopīs* to steal butter. She was not in the house as she had gone to the Yamunā to fetch water. While they were stealing butter, she suddenly returned. As soon as the children saw her approaching they ran away, but somehow the *gopī* caught hold of Kṛṣṇa. She thought, "Every day this boy comes to our house to harass us. When we go to complain to Yaśodā she never believes us. Today I have caught this boy red-handed. I must bring Him to His mother to prove how Kṛṣṇa is stealing butter."

With this thought, she caught hold of Kṛṣṇa's hand and pulled Him towards His house to bring Him to mother Yaśodā. While she was pulling, Kṛṣṇa was trying to resist and thus being dragged behind her. At one point along the way Kṛṣṇa somehow managed to release His hand from her grip and quickly replaced it with her son's hand, without her noticing it. Her son was one of Kṛṣṇa's friends, all of whom were at this point accompanying Him as He was being dragged along to His mother. She was now pulling the hand of her son who was walking behind her, while she was thinking she was pulling Kṛṣṇa. When she reached mother Yaśodā's house she screamed, "Mother Yaśodā! Mother Yaśodā! Just see, I have brought your son. He was stealing butter in my house. I have complained to you so many times. But you do not believe me. This time I have brought Him personally as I have just caught Him red-handed stealing butter in my house!" Yaśodā came out of her house after hearing the screaming of the *gopī*, and said, "Why should my son go to your house to steal butter? My son is here in my house. He is eating butter, sitting right here in my house."

Yaśodā saw that the *gopī* was holding her own son's hand. She asked, "Where is Kṛṣṇa?" The *gopī* then presented the thief to mother Yaśodā, and was shocked to see that it was her own son. Mother Yaśodā said, "Just see, you have caught your own son who was stealing butter from your house. You must be thinking too much about Kṛṣṇa. That's why when anybody does any mischief you think of my son."

The *gopī* then saw Kṛṣṇa, sitting peacefully in mother Yaśodā's house, eating butter and smiling at her. She was very surprised and she couldn't believe what was happening. Feeling very disappointed, she picked up her son and placed him on her shoulder. While she was walking back to her house, the boy tapped her on the head, saying, "Hey, look at me." When the *gopī* looked at the boy, she saw Kṛṣṇa on her shoulder instead of her son. Feeling overwhelmed, she put Kṛṣṇa down. As soon as Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet touched the ground, He ran off, saying, "Just see what happened. Never try to catch Me again. Today I became your son, but if you catch Me next time, I will become your husband!" In this way Kṛṣṇa would jokingly harass the Vraja *gopikās*, who would thoroughly enjoy Kṛṣṇa's childhood pranks.

On another occasion, a *gopī* found Kṛṣṇa stealing butter from her house and she very expertly managed to catch hold of Kṛṣṇa. "Today," she thought, "I will not take Kṛṣṇa to mother Yaśodā. I will rather bind him here and bring Yaśodā to see her little thief." Thinking like this, she brought a rope and tried to bind Kṛṣṇa to a pillar. Whatever method she tried was unsuccessful. Somehow she couldn't manage to bind Kṛṣṇa. After numerous attempts by the *gopī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "You may try in so many ways to bind Me, but you will always fail as you do not know how to bind Me. If you really want to know how, then I can show you." The *gopī* agreed and Kṛṣṇa then made the *gopī* stand next to the pillar and started to bind her in order to teach her how to bind. After tightly binding her to the pillar, Kṛṣṇa tied the rope with some strong knots, instructing, "This is the way you should bind Me." He then ran away, leaving the *gopī* fully bound. Although this *gopī* could not bind Kṛṣṇa, mother Yaśodā was able to bind Him by the strength of her loving parental affection. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī explains the great wonder of the love of mother Yaśodā, how she has made the impossible possible. It is impossible to bind Kṛṣṇa, as He is *paraṁ brahma*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and is all-pervading. This means He has no outer limits and therefore no inner limits. He has no *pūrvāparam*, no before and no after. He was in existence before this world was manifested, as the cause, and He will continue to be in existence after this world disappears. Without His existence as cause, this world could not have become manifest. He is the entire world. How then is it possible to bind Him? If this world cannot bind Him, then how can He possibly be bound by a mere rope, which is made of but a tiny fraction of matter in this world?

Thus the great opulence of Lord Kṛṣṇa has been described, which clearly indicates that it is impossible for anyone to bind Him. Yet mother Yaśodā bound that Kṛṣṇa, who is beyond approach by any of the senses and who has appeared in the form of a human being. She bound Him by a rope to the grinding mortar, thinking of Him as her son.

The unlimited thirst for relishing the limitless parental love of mother

Yaśodā that resides within the heart of Bāla Gopāla, who is the source of all power, has made it possible for her to bind Him with an ordinary rope. Mother Yaśodā was able to do this as the Lord was displaying the form of an ordinary, material boy. If He appeared as an ordinary boy, then the question may be asked, "How can He have no inner or outer limits?" This is because He is "*adhokṣaja*." Even if He is visible, like an ordinary boy to the ordinary eyes of people in general, He is also beyond the knowledge acquired by the senses or beyond sense perception. This means He cannot be perceived by the material senses. He is simultaneously *avyakta* or un-manifest and *vyakta* or manifest.

nityāvyakto 'pi bhagavān īkṣyate nija-śaktitaḥ
tām ṛte paramātmānaṁ kaḥ paśyatāmitaṁ prabhum

"Even though God is eternally un-manifest, by His internal potency He is also fully manifest. Without the help of this energy, who is able to see that infinite *paraṁ brahma*, Parameśvara?"

(Nārāyaṇādhyātma, quoted in the Caityanya-bhāgavata, Ādi-khaṇḍa, 3.52-53)

This proves that nobody can manifest Him. He is un-manifest and can be manifest by His own energy alone. He reveals Himself through the influence of His inconceivable *kṛpā-śakti* or mercy energy, to those who are surrendered to Him. Behind the manifested and un-manifested aspects of His pastimes, His inconceivable potency is at work.

prakṛtibhyaḥ paraṁ yac ca tad acintyasya lakṣaṇam

"One cannot use material reasoning on those things which are inconceivable. Inconceivable refers to those things existing beyond *prakṛti*."

(Mahābhārata 6.6.11)

śrutes tu śabda-mūlatvāt

"The defects of the agent do not apply to Brahman because of scriptural statements, which are the only proof concerning inconceivable subjects."

(Brahma-sūtra 2.1.27)

Sruti says, "God is neither gross nor subtle but is simultaneously gross and subtle." In other words, He is the perfection of form while simultaneously being formless. He has no colour, but still His body is bluish and His eyes are reddish. It is known from scripture that God possesses all opposite qualities. Opposite means the extreme of everything. He is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest. He is the controller of everything, and yet He is controlled by His devotees. He is within everything and at the same time He is apart from everything. This is His inconceivable potency.

Kṛṣṇa has said, "By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them. And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, I am not a part of this cosmic manifestation, for My Self is the very source of creation."

(Bhagavad-gītā 9.4-5)

By this direct statement of the Lord from *Bhagavad-gītā* we can understand that God possesses all qualities as well as their opposites. In this way He can be simultaneously *vyakta* and *avaktya*. This is possible only for the Lord. While He is constantly all-pervading He can have an isolated or localised form at the same time. In both cases He retains all His powers. Even if the Lord has taken the form of a small boy, He retains the power of all-pervasiveness. Thus it is not possible for His mother to bind the all-pervading Lord with a rope. The Lord had proven His greatness when He displayed unlimited universes to mother Yaśodā in His mouth.

But this great opulence and greatness of the Lord does not manifest to mother Yaśodā. Mother Yaśodā thinks, "This boy is my son." Due to her parental love, she cannot see the all-pervasive nature of God. She was able to bind the all-powerful *vibhu* because of her parental loving mood. Within the mind of mother Yaśodā, her son's *vibhutā-śakti* or all-pervasive power remains covered or does not manifest.

In this regard Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments, "The all-pervading Supreme Personality of Godhead, controller of all controllers, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has bound all living entities by the rope of *māyā* (*ābrahma-stambha-paryantaṁ sarvaṁ jagad māyā-mayam*), starting from a blade of grass all the way up to Brahmā, has now been bound by mother Yaśodā by the power of her love. She bound Kṛṣṇa by the rope of her love. Only in this way was it possible. We can only bind something which has an outer surface or outer periphery, something which is limited in its size. If something is all-pervasive, this means it has no outer limits, no periphery, and consequently no inner limits either. How then can one bind such a thing? It is not normally possible. The Lord is *sarva-deśa-vyāpaka*, all-pervading, and He is also *sarva-kāla-vyāpaka*, eternal. That means there is nothing before or after Him. *Kāla* or time flows eternally."

The Lord is also the world. Because this world has manifested from His energy and because the energy and the energetic are non-different, we can conclude that the Lord is the world. If the Lord is the world then the world cannot bind the Lord. If the world cannot bind the Lord, then how can a rope, which is an insignificant part of the world, bind the Lord? We cannot dismiss Kṛṣṇa as just a small boy and question His all-pervasiveness, as He had already proven this by displaying the entire cosmic manifestation in His mouth. We must therefore conclude that it is impossible to bind Kṛṣṇa. If so, then how did mother Yaśodā achieve this incomprehensible task?

She bound Him by the power of her unparalleled parental love. Among the unlimited qualities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He has a quality known as *prema-*

vaśyatā, which means He is controlled by love. Because of this quality of the Lord, it was possible for Yaśodā to bind Him by a rope of love.

Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa was so mischievous, He deserved the punishment His mother had devised for Him. She had a duty to train her son properly and could not neglect this. As mother Yaśodā was binding Kṛṣṇa, something very interesting happened. She was about to tie the knot when she discovered that the rope was short by two fingers. She added more rope, but again it was two fingers short. She made several more attempts, but whatever quantity of rope she added, she was surprisingly two fingers short at every attempt to tie the knot. Yaśodā thought, "My child, due to His uncommon naughtiness, has become very restless and is not allowing me to bind Him." This reflects the very sweet mood of the parental love of mother Yaśodā.

Of the Lord's many potencies, one is *vibhutā*. *Vibhu* means big, and this potency appeared in the waist of the Lord, increasing it in a way that was invisible to mother Yaśodā. We have seen that the love of mother Yaśodā was one of the main factors for her being able to bind the Lord, but is this love all that is needed? Actually the love of mother Yaśodā had to be combined with the sanction or acceptance of the Lord. The reason the rope was two fingers short every time indicates the two essential components needed to bind or capture Kṛṣṇa: eagerness for Kṛṣṇa and the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa saw the labour of mother Yaśodā, He felt compassion or mercy and thus He accepted the binding.

When mother Yaśodā was trying to bind Kṛṣṇa, He began to shout, begging help from mother Rohiṇī. Kṛṣṇa said, "Oh, mother Rohiṇī! Oh, brother Balarāma! Please help me. My mother is binding me!" But they were not there as they had gone to the house of Upananda to attend a program. If mother Rohiṇī had been there, the situation may not have escalated to such a degree where mother Yaśodā had to bind Kṛṣṇa. Mother Rohiṇī would most likely have intervened to normalise the situation.

Due to Kṛṣṇa's wailing and pleas for help, the neighbourhood ladies came to Nanda Bābā's house to see the reason for all the commotion. They were surprised to see mother Yaśodā punishing her darling son by trying to bind him with a rope. The *gopīs* thought, "Today Kanha must have done something very mischievous in His house. He usually comes to our houses to steal butter. When we come to complain, Yaśodā refuses to accept that Kṛṣṇa would steal butter from other houses. But today Kṛṣṇa has done something naughty at His house, causing His mother great anger."

The *gopīs* pleaded on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, "Oh, Yaśodā! Please release this boy. Consider Him punished already. What great offense has He committed for which you are trying to bind Him? This is very common behaviour for children."

But mother Yaśodā did not care for their words. She became more determined to bind Kṛṣṇa. Seeing Yaśodā so flustered, the *gopīs* began to laugh, saying, "Oh! Just see, you can never bind Him! There must be a secret to binding this boy. It appears that destiny is protecting Him." Mother Yaśodā initially tried to bind Kṛṣṇa with the rope she was using to churn butter, and then eventually used every rope in her house. The neighbourhood ladies, jokingly, brought more ropes from their houses and said, "Take all these ropes to bind your son. Let us see how you bind Him."

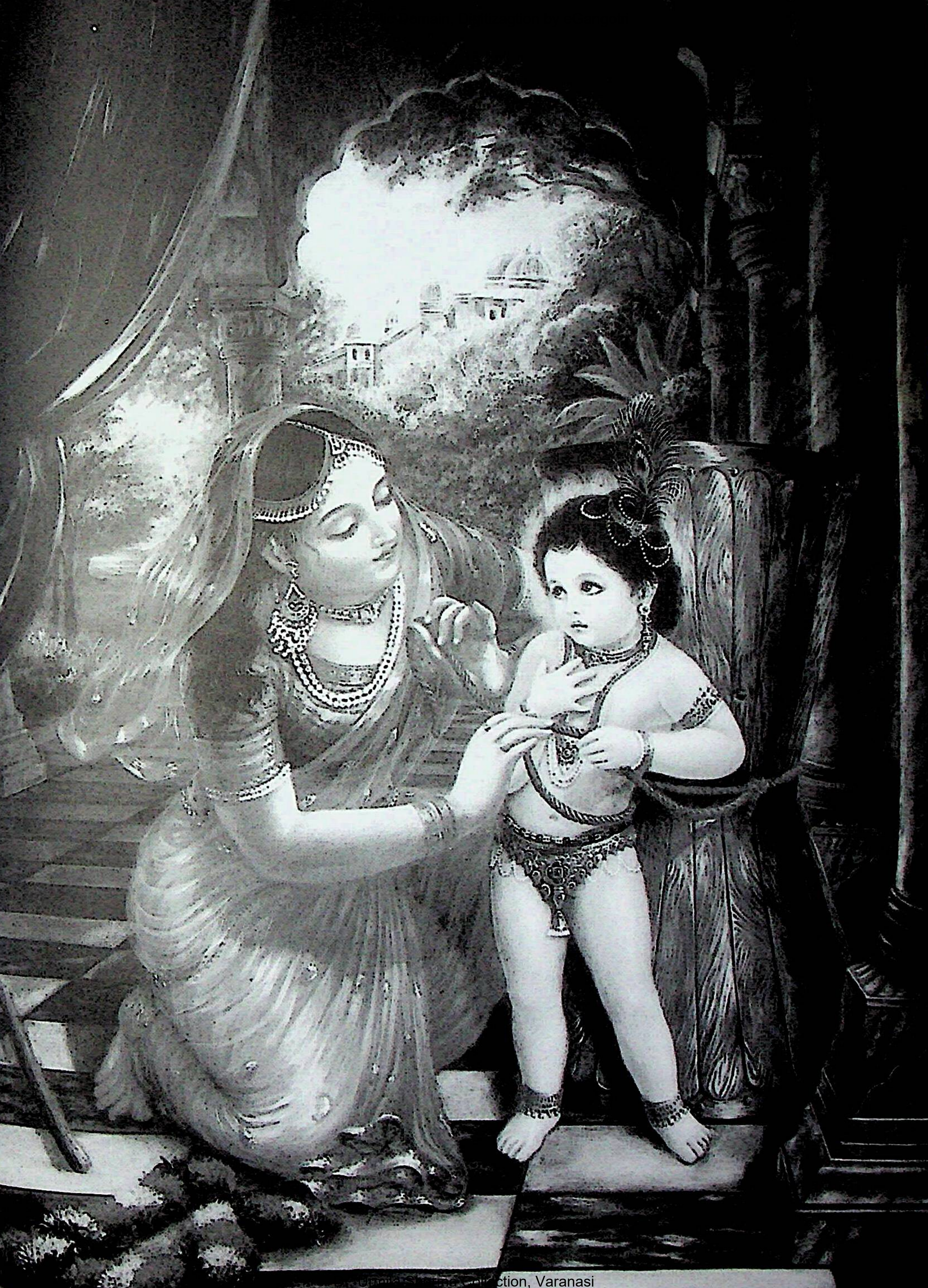
Hearing the *gopīs*, mother Yaśodā became even more determined and said, "What are you talking about? Do you think I cannot bind this small boy? I will try all day and use all the ropes in my house to see how big His belly is." Mother Yaśodā was also laughing along with the *gopīs*, who were all very surprised to witness this miraculous event. Mother Yaśodā said, "He was born at the wrong time. Thus He does not know good from bad. But I think you have been put under a spell since internally you are prejudiced against Him, but externally you show yourselves differently."

The neighbouring ladies laughed and said, "Falling at your feet, we swear that we are not under some amazing spell." Mother Yaśodā then began to think, "According to Garga's words, the Lord's powers are covering this boy, and He does not know what is happening."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has described the reason why the rope became shorter. He states, "When Yaśodā was trying to bind Kṛṣṇa it was during the morning. Usually at that time He would go to play with His friends. By that time, all His friends had come and were looking through their windows and calling Kṛṣṇa to play with them. Kṛṣṇa wanted to go out and play with His friends and His *līlā-śakti* acted according to His desire. When His *līlā-śakti* saw that Kṛṣṇa wanted to go out and play but that His mother was trying to bind Him, thus stopping Him, the *līlā-śakti* thought, "Who can bind my Lord?" Thus His *vibhutā-śakti* was sent by His *satya-saṅkalpa-śakti* to appear in the waist of Kṛṣṇa. As a result whatever amount of rope was used it was always short.

Mother Yaśodā thought, "Alas! The size of my son's waist is only as big as my palm, but I have used rope as long as a hundred hands and still it is not sufficient to bind this boy! Surprisingly though, I do not see His belly growing in size. The second surprising thing is that every time I am about to knot the rope, it is exactly two fingers short, not three or four!"

The neighbourhood ladies said, "Alas! After using all the ropes in your house, the small waist of this boy still could not be bound. This indicates His good fortune. Destiny has dictated that He will not be bound. Oh Yaśodā! Better you refrain from this endeavour." Hearing this from the ladies, mother Yaśodā became more obstinate and thought, "Today I will try to bind this boy even if it takes until evening and I have to use all the ropes in this village, but I will see the end of this boy's belly. I have to know the size of His waist." In this mood, mother Yaśodā, the greatest well-wisher of her son, would not give up the effort to bind Kṛṣṇa, setting the scene for a transcendental contest between God and His devotee. Finally Lord Kṛṣṇa, upon seeing the labour of His mother, gave up His impudence (*haṭha*).



In this way, that Supreme Personality of Godhead, most attractive and completely independent Kṛṣṇa, who is the controller of all controllers, showed His great quality of *bhṛtya-vaśyatā*, becoming subordinate to His *bhṛtya*, or servant.

He is controlled by His devotees. He who controls all controllers is controlled by His devotee.

One may ask, "Can Kṛṣṇa really be bound in this way?" Śukadeva Gosvāmī says, "Yes, because of His merciful nature, Kṛṣṇa can actually be tied and bound by His devotee, *kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane*. Kṛṣṇa's merciful nature, *kṛpā-śakti*, prevailed and subdued all of His other *śaktis*.

His Holiness Rādhā Govinda Mahārāja describes a very nice exchange between Balarāma and Yaśodā as well as Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.

After binding Kṛṣṇa to a grinding mortar, mother Yaśodā sternly told Kṛṣṇa, "Stay here! If You dare to move, I'll beat You." She asked the other *gopīs* to keep an eye on Him. Until this point, Balarāma was not there, so someone informed Balarāma that His brother was tied up. Upon arriving, Balarāma assumed His Saṅkarṣaṇa mood and strongly declared, "Who dares to bind Kṛṣṇa? I am Saṅkarṣaṇa. I am Śeṣa Nāga. As Saṅkarṣaṇa, I can burn the entire universe with one breath. As Śeṣa Nāga, I can inundate the entire Vraja with the poison coming from My one thousand hoods. Does this wrong-doer not know what I can do? Who has done this? Who tied Kṛṣṇa?"

Someone told Balarāma that it was mother Yaśodā who had bound Kṛṣṇa. Upon hearing this, Balarāma's mood changed. He was no longer like a fiery snake. He became like a timid mouse. Balarāma's anger waned and He did not know what to do. Balarāma saw that Kṛṣṇa was crying. And Kṛṣṇa, seeing Balarāma, cried even more to invoke His mercy. Seeing Kṛṣṇa crying, Balarāma became angry again and shouted, "Who has tied Kṛṣṇa? He is Nārāyaṇa. He is Narasiṁha. He is Vāmana. He is Matsya. Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all *avatāras*. He is everything. Who is the guilty one? I have one thousands hoods—I will burn this Vraja to the ground with the flames from My one thousands hoods!"

Looking at Balarāma, mother Yaśodā sarcastically said, "Oh, I see, Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all incarnations. If that is so, who then are You?" Balarāma replied, "I am Lakṣmaṇa. I am Śeṣa Nāga, I am Saṅkarṣaṇa. I can do this, I can do that." Mother Yaśodā then said, "Do all these incarnations have to appear only in my home?" She picked up her stick and waved it threateningly at Balarāma. She warned, "You had better get out of here before I beat and bind You as well!" Hearing this, Balarāma ran away.

All His *saṅkarṣaṇa* power was no longer present. Mother Yaśodā said, "Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān? Indeed! He hears a cat meow and runs to me. Bhagavān Narasiṁha is like this? If Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān, then why does He need to steal *makhan*?"

Balarāma ran from mother Yaśodā and went to Kṛṣṇa, saying, "I told You so many times to give up this *makhan* stealing. Did You listen to Me? You ignored My advice and now You are suffering. What can I do? If someone else had tied You, I would have taken care of it. But when Mā ties You, what can I do? I am helpless. What can I do to stop her? I heard that You broke the yogurt pot, why did You do that? Even if You had broken the pot, why did You not just stop at that? Instead You had to continue Your mischief and make her more angry. My dear brother Kṛṣṇa, I am sorry, there is nothing I can do." Kṛṣṇa heard this and began to cry even more.

Balarāma continued, "I told You so many times to give up this stealing habit but You would not listen. This serves You right. Today You are getting punished. All You can do is cry. Who can release You?" Balarāma pleaded with mother Yaśodā, "Please untie Him, please untie Him." Then He said, "Then I will untie Him. I will go and untie Him." Balarāma was hoping that mother Yaśodā would relent and tell Him to untie Kṛṣṇa. But mother Yaśodā did not relent. In the end, Balarāma went back to Kṛṣṇa and They both cried. Kṛṣṇa cried because He was tied up and Balarāma cried because He was helpless.

Mother Yaśodā, after binding Kṛṣṇa, had left to perform her daily duties. While His mother was engaged in her household activities, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while still bound, cast His merciful glance towards the two *arjuna* trees. Mother Yaśodā left Kṛṣṇa but she did not go too far away. She also engaged a few boys to guard Kṛṣṇa and she knew very well that her boy did not have enough strength to pull the grinding mortar. Thus she had no fear that her son would wander off and get up to some mischief. Mother Yaśodā said, "You restless boy! If You can, then let me see You release Yourself from this binding."

Gopāla-campū describes this: Having tied Him up and showing harshness to Him to teach Him, mother Yaśodā went to do her household chores with the other women who were laughing. She placed other boys around her child to protect Him. When the neighbourhood women left, Kṛṣṇa pretended to cry for a while. Then He became joyful at the prospect of moving the mortar to many places. Although He was tied up, with great faith, increased by being surrounded by the boys, He played with them while smiling, and moved the mortar bit by bit while they also laughed. He then had them go to the empty houses of the women and steal the butter hanging in pots. But He did not desire to free Himself from the mortar using His hands or any instrument, in order to give joy by pulling the mortar.

Here it should be noted that while Kṛṣṇa was bound He still had the power to deliver the two trees. Thus even if the Lord has been bound by His devotee He still retains His power to deliver others. When mother Yaśodā left Kṛṣṇa after binding Him with the rope to the grinding mortar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa could have asked the other boys to untie the rope and release Him. But He did not ask for that because He enjoyed being bound by His mother. He enjoyed that His mother had bound Him with the rope of her love.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has said, "Kṛṣṇa had seen these trees since His birth. But on this particular day He had a very merciful glance. Why did He not have this merciful glance before? Because on this day, Kṛṣṇa was in bondage. He realised the pain of bondage, which reminded Him that Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva, the two sons of Kuvera, had been standing there in the form of trees for so many years. Empathising with the suffering of the sons of Kuvera, due to His own bondage, the Lord felt mercy. Kṛṣṇa thought, 'I have been bound by My mother due to some debt that I must repay.' He decided to repay the debt by delivering the sons of Kuvera."

Desiring to pull down the two trees, Kṛṣṇa started pulling hard. He uprooted both of the *arjuna* trees, creating a terrible sound. All the inhabitants of Vraja (other than the deaf) could not maintain their composure on hearing that sound. What was most astonishing, however, was that Kṛṣṇa had broken the two trees which were hard as thunderbolts, but He could not break the bondage of affection He had with His mother.

Poets praise this:

"I praise the child cared for by the women of Vraja. He has a dark complexion and His ankle bells jingle. He gives joy when He crawls. He produced a rough sound as He pulled the mortar over the earth. His eyes became restless at the curious, thunderous sound of the falling *arjuna* trees."

Hearing the fearful sound of the falling trees the inhabitants of Vraja fainted for a *muhūrta*. Only the boys around Kṛṣṇa did not faint. Experiencing the height of sweetness of His pastimes, they did not become frightened and remained immobile like painted pictures. Hearing that sound from far off, the villagers speculated on its origin and went towards the place. Arriving all at the same time and full of anxiety, they conversed with each other:

How have these trees fallen without wind, without rain, without thunderbolts, without an attack by elephants? How is it possible for someone to uproot the trees when there is no one here? For that reason everyone fainted on hearing that loud sound. They noticed that Kṛṣṇa was near the trees and that He was smiling. Pulling the mortar, He was experiencing bliss in His actions. They surrounded Him, saying, "How did this happen?"

Seeing His father coming from behind, Kṛṣṇa began crying. His frightened father smiled in order to comfort the child and untied Him. Kissing the child's face, he repeatedly asked what happened although he knew the cause of His being tied up. "Where is the rascal who has tied You to the mortar?" Attached to His father, He approached him after some time and whispered in his ear, "O father! Mother did this."

Yaśodā, after recovering from fainting and repenting what she had done, had told Nanda everything. Thus he already knew. But he did not want to say anything suddenly to Kṛṣṇa while alone with Him. Not with disrespect, but out of ignorance of the details he asked the other boys, "How did this happen?"

The boys spoke. "Kṛṣṇa went between the two trees in order to go to a wider space for playing and pulled the immovable mortar by its base in a crooked manner. He produced a cracking sound in the trees and then suddenly made them fall to the earth. Then two people like fire, decorated with bracelets, crowns and earrings, emerged from the broken trees and offered respects in all directions. They then praised Kṛṣṇa. The two then departed for the north."

Hearing this, all the people with parental feelings including Nanda dismissed it as children's talk. Others, however, could not remove the doubt in their hearts.

Gradually one by one, others came and joined Nanda. Holding Kṛṣṇa on his chest, he went to the Yamunā River to perform his daily rites. Taking a bath with his son, he had *brāhmaṇas* chant auspicious prayers and after dismissing them with great gifts, returned to his house to take his morning meal. Being unhappy because of separation from Kṛṣṇa and ashamed of having tied Him up, Yaśodā did not come out of the house and did not talk to other women in the house. When the other women left, Rohiṇī, who solves all problems, surrounded her along with the respectable kitchen assistants.

Nanda brought Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and ate his meal with them while engaging in affectionate, soft talk. He relaxed with the two, who were supreme bliss incarnate, for two *muhūrtas*. His heart was satisfied as if lying on a soft bed. He went to the cowshed at the time when the cows returned and supervised their milking. Bringing white sugar from the house, he had the two boys, along with his friends, drink most beneficial milk fresh from the cows as a substitute for breast milk. He taught Them how to write some letters.

Later, entering the house, he met with others to have his evening meal. Desiring unbroken happiness for his son, the head women including Rohiṇī, the jewels of their families, came and made a request. "O King! Yaśodā has not eaten all day and she does not speak to anyone. Seeing this, all others have also followed her example." Nanda spoke with sadness and a smile, "What can we do? After showing anger, one should regret one's fault."

They said with tears in their eyes. "Ah! She is very soft internally and externally. She will be devastated by your words."

Slightly smiling, Nanda Mahārāja then asked his son, "Will You go to Your mother?"

Kṛṣṇa said, "No, no! I will spend My time with you. I will not go to mother. I will stay with My father."

The wives of Nanda Mahārāja's elder brothers said, "Whose milk will You drink? If You do not go to Your mother then who will feed You milk?"
Kṛṣṇa said, "I will drink fresh milk from the cows mixed with sugar."

The ladies said, "Who will You play with?"

Kṛṣṇa said, "I will play with My father. I will bring My brother also."

Nanda Mahārāja said, "Will You not go to Your brother's mother?"

Angrily Kṛṣṇa said with tears in His eyes, "She left Me and went away."

Hearing this, Rohiṇī, with tears in her eyes said softly, "O son! Why are You so harsh? Your mother is suffering."

Not listening to her words, Kṛṣṇa with tearful eyes glanced at His father's face. To attract Kṛṣṇa, Rohiṇī gave a signal to Balarāma. Balarāma went to Kṛṣṇa and held His hand. Kṛṣṇa rejected His hand and went to the lap of His father and held His arms around his neck, looking at Nanda's tear- filled eyes, and bringing Nanda under His control.

Seeing Kṛṣṇa's internal affection for His mother, Nanda raised his hand as if to beat Yaśodā, in order to reveal Kṛṣṇa's affection for her: "O son! If you agree I will beat her." Kṛṣṇa could not tolerate this and blocked Nanda's hand.

Smiling again, Nanda, showing great compassion because of his parental affection, and, understanding the heart of Kṛṣṇa's mother, said, "O son! If Your mother is in this condition, what will You do?" He spoke while smiling, indicating she would die. Because of His childlike nature, Kṛṣṇa immediately became anxious for His mother.

With tears in His eyes He said, "Where is mother? I must go there." In anxiety, He went to Rohiṇī's lap. While all were noisily laughing, Rohiṇī, who bestows the greatest happiness, took Him and entered the house. He hugged His mother's neck while crying in joy. Yaśodā kissed the child's head and made sounds like a cow. With melted heart, she sobbed, making all others there sob.

Yaśodā pacified the women with comforting words and a slight glow appeared on her face. She appeared healthy with a beautiful face and satisfied her child with breast milk. With the other helpful women, she fed Kṛṣṇa and Balarāmaa.

For three days after the incident, being reserved, Yaśodā did not show herself to Nanda. But on another day, Kṛṣṇa brought her to His father on his order, holding the edge of her cloth.

From the day when He was bound, the women of Vraja called the beautiful dark child "Dāmodara" in a joking way.

What poet amongst all the people in this world can describe Yaśodā, whom Śukadeva has said is much superior to Brahmā, Śiva and Lakṣmī? The drum roll of her fame announced by Śukadeva Gosvāmī wanders throughout the three worlds with great renown:

"Neither Lord Brahmā, nor Lord Śiva, nor even the goddess of fortune, who is always the better half of the Supreme Lord, can obtain from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the deliverer from this material world, such mercy as received by mother Yaśodā."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.9.20)

Jaya mother Yaśodā-mayī KI! JAYA!!!!!

२

How Can Kṛṣṇa Be God?

This pastime of binding Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, although very sweet, has a very deep philosophical meaning. In this description of the *dāma-bandhana* pastime, it is clear that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *paraṁ brahma,* exhibits some qualities through His behaviour which are not supposed to be manifest within *paraṁ brahma.* How do we reconcile this?

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has explained the apparent contradiction exhibited in this pastime. It has been proven that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *paraṁ brahma,* Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Paraṁ brahma* is not supposed to have many of the qualities that have been exhibited in this pastime. *Paraṁ brahma,* being *ātmārāma,* is not supposed to be hungry. Being *āptakāma* or ever-satisfied, He is not supposed to be dissatisfied. Being beyond the three modes of material nature, He is not supposed to be angry. As Lakṣmīpati, the Lord of wealth, He is not supposed to steal. Being the supreme controller, of whom even Yamarāja and fear personified are afraid, He is not supposed to be afraid. Since He is unattainable even by great *yogīs* travelling at the speed of the mind, He is not supposed to get caught. Being *ānanda-puñja,* full of bliss, He is not supposed to be crying with sadness. As Māyādhīśa, the controller of *māyā* who binds every living entity with the ropes of the three modes, He is not supposed to be bound.

However, in this pastime we see all these qualities exhibited. Kṛṣṇa felt very hungry, dissatisfied, and angry. He stole, He was afraid, ran away, was caught by His mother, and was scolded by her. He cried and was eventually bound by His mother.

How can we reconcile that *ātmārāma, nitya-tṛpta, śuddha-sattva,* Lord Kṛṣṇa, has exhibited such hunger, dissatisfaction, anger and so on? Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has given a very nice explanation of this. Along with the unlimited qualities of God, His quality of *pūrṇatā* and *īśitā* remain within Him eternally. But among all these qualities, His quality of mercy towards His devotees is undoubtedly the topmost. Without this supreme mercy, all His other great qualities would not be pleasurable to anyone. If someone's nature gives pleasure to people then he is considered to be good, but if he is merciless then he is considered to be faulty. God cannot have any faults and we should consider this quality of God, to be merciful towards His devotees (*bhaktānugraha*) to be His greatest quality.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.19.5:

yathā tvaṁ kṛpayā bhūtyā tejasā mahimaujasā
juṣṭa īśa guṇaiḥ sarvais tato 'si bhagavān prabhuḥ

"O my Lord, because You are endowed with causeless mercy, all opulence, all prowess and all glories, strength and transcendental qualities, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of everyone."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has mentioned in his commentary to ŚB 6.9.5, "You, being served by the *kṛpā-śakti,* wait eagerly to get a *tulasī* leaf from a devotee. You ask your devotee, 'Today I am very hungry. Please give Me something to eat.' Thus even though the Lord is *pūrṇa-kāma,* He is also *apūrṇa-kāma.*

By this we understand that Kṛṣṇa is *bhaktānugraha* or merciful to His devotees. This is His greatest quality. This mercy shown to the devotee has to be given in at least the same proportion as the devotion the devotee has for Kṛṣṇa. If He gives less mercy to the devotee than is reflected by his devotion then it will be a fault on the Lord's part. Kṛṣṇa has said, *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

"As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11)

If the devotion of a devotee is completely causeless, without any designation, having the power to control Kṛṣṇa, then Kṛṣṇa is bound to reciprocate with His devotee to the degree of love exhibited by the devotee. By this, the greatness or opulence of the Lord is not reduced in any way.

mora putra, mora sakhā, mora prāṇa-pati
ei-bhāve yei more kare śuddha-bhakti
āpanāke baḍa māne, āmāre sama-hīna
sei bhāve ha-i āmi tāhāra adhīna

"If one cherishes pure loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as his son, his friend or his beloved, regarding himself as great and considering Me his equal or inferior, I become subordinate to him."

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 4.21-22)

When the Lord is controlled by His devotee, He is still the controller. In this pastime, even when He was bound by the rope of His mother, He uprooted two huge *arjuna* trees, and simply by His merciful glance delivered Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva. By this act of being tied by His mother, His greatness or opulence is not reduced. Rather His greatness has been doubled due to manifesting His quality of *bhaktānugraha*. Thus it is necessary for God to be controlled by His devotee. Lord Nārāyaṇa has also spoken about this *bhakta-vaśyatā*, or how He is controlled by His devotee.

ahaṁ bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ

"I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires, I sit only within the cores of their hearts. What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 9.4.63)

In this verse, *sādhus* or devotees refers to those who do not have any desire for *dharma, artha, kāma* or even for liberation. If someone's devotion is so free from ulterior motives that they do not even seek liberation, then the Lord's reciprocal mercy also has to be on that unmotivated, unconditional level. Kṛṣṇa is bound to reciprocate with the mood of the service and desire of His devotee. If mother Yaśodā desires to serve Him in the mood of parental love then Kṛṣṇa has to reciprocate accordingly and exhibit all those qualities which are in line with parental love and will give pleasure to mother Yaśodā. Thus His activities of stealing, hunger, anger etc. are all justifiably exhibited. In this way His greatness is not reduced, and in fact His glory is magnified by His *bhakta-vātsalyatā* quality.

Kṛṣṇa has exhibited these pastimes of hunger, dissatisfaction, anger and so on in a favourable way according to the parental loving mood of mother Yaśodā. Kṛṣṇa's child-like behaviour, appearing like an overwhelmed child, was not simply an act or illusion, it was the genuine mood of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His internal mood manifested through these childhood pastimes.

Queen Kuntī states in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.31:

gopy ādade tvayi kṛtāgasi dāma tāvad
yā te daśāśru-kalilāñjana-sambhramākṣam
vaktraṁ ninīya bhaya-bhāvanayā sthitasya
sā māṁ vimohayati bhīr api yad bibheti

"My dear Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā took up a rope to bind You when You committed an offense, and Your perturbed eyes overflooded with tears, which washed the mascara from Your eyes. And You were afraid, though fear personified is afraid of You. This sight is bewildering to me."

If it was not the Lord's genuine mood, and just an act, then mother Kuntī would not have been so bewildered. Śukadeva Gosvāmī says "*evaṁ sandarśitā*" which means, "It was shown in this way." Lord Hari showed the extent of His "*bhṛtya-vaśyatā*," how much He is controlled by His devotee. He did this in a very profound way, by accepting the ropes binding His belly. This kind of *bhakta-vaśyatā* cannot be seen outside of Vraja, because this kind of "*mamatā*," (mood of ownership) necessary for binding the Lord cannot be found anywhere else.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī says, "Even if God is supremely full in opulence or greatness, still due to His *prema-vaśyatā* nature, this binding is supremely wonderful. Thus, this cannot be regarded as a fault within Him, but rather as His ornament. God by His own nature becomes perplexed by hunger even though He is *ātmārāma*, He becomes dissatisfied even though He is *pūrṇakāma, āptakāma* or fully satisfied, He becomes angry even though He is *śuddha-sattva* or beyond the modes of material nature, He steals even though He is the husband of Lakṣmī in Vaikuṇṭha, He runs away out of fear even though He is the cause of fear for Mahākāla and Yamarāja etc. Even though He can run faster than the mind He still gets caught by His mother. Even though He is *ānanda-puñja, ānandaṁ brahma,* He cries in sadness, and even though He is all-pervading He still becomes limited in order to be bound. By exhibiting all these apparent contradictions in front of mother Yaśodā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has shown His mood of *bhakta-vaśyatā* in full. This is not just some imitation or pretending. Brahmā, Śiva, Sanat-kumāra and others have achieved knowledge with proper realization and yet have experienced great wonder within their hearts upon witnessing these activities of the Lord. Thus this does not arise from ignorance.

Even though the Lord is "*svādhīna*" or fully independent, we do not see that independence here. He is dependent, *parādhīna* or *bhaktādhīna*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa derives the topmost pleasure with the help of *prema,* which is the essence of

His *cit-śakti*. For this reason His *kṛpā-śakti* is responsible for this mood of *bhakta-vaśyatā*.

In this regard Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has given a nice description in his book *Mādhurya-kādambinī*. This description explains why Kṛṣṇa even if *paraṁ brahma* still exhibits some qualities which are not supposed to be in *paraṁ brahma*. We are inserting here one portion from *Mādhurya-kādambinī*. "Seeing the devotee yearning to relish the *saundarya* (beauty) and other sweet qualities of the Lord all at once, but helpless like a *cātaka* bird trying to catch every raindrop at once in his beak, the Lord considers, "Oh! Why am I keeping so many wonderful qualities to Myself." To let the devotee partake of them all, the Lord manifests His seventh *mādhurya, kāruṇya* (compassion), the superintendent of all the Lord's *śaktis*. She reigns as a supreme empress in the middle of the lotus on whose eight surrounding petals are the eight *śaktis* mentioned in the *Āgama-śāstras* (*vimalā, utkarṣiṇī, jñāna, kriyā, yoga, prahvī, satya,* and *īśānī*). This *kāruṇya,* also known as *anugraha* (kindness or favor), manifests itself in the lotus eyes of the Lord. To His devotees in the mood of servant it is known as *kṛpā-śakti,* to His other devotees as *vātsalya* or sometimes *kāruṇya*. When it appears in relation to the devotees in conjugal mood it is known as *citta-vidrāviṇī ākarṣiṇī-śakti* (that melts the heart of Kṛṣṇa and attracts Him). Thus it is known by many names according to the different moods of the devotee. By this kripa-sakti the Lord'□ all pervading free will (iccha-sakti) influences the heart and causes great astonishment even in those realized souls who are fully self-satisfied atmaramas. This *kṛpā-śakti* invites one quality called *bhakta-vātsalya* (affection for His devotees) to rule as emperor over all the Lord's auspicious, spiritual qualities that are described by the deity of the earth in the First Canto of *Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam*:

satyaṁ śaucaṁ dayā kṣāntis   tyāgaḥ santoṣa ārjavam
śamo damas tapaḥ sāmyaṁ   titikṣoparatiḥ śrutam
jñānaṁ viraktir aiśvaryaṁ   śauryaṁ tejo balaṁ smṛtiḥ
svātantryaṁ kauśalaṁ kāntir   dhairyaṁ mārdavam eva ca

prāgalbhyaṁ praśrayaḥ śīlaṁ saha ojo balaṁ bhagaḥ
gāmbhīryaṁ sthairyam āstikyaṁ kīrtir māno 'nahaṅkṛtiḥ
ete cānye ca bhagavan nityā yatra mahā-guṇāḥ
prārthyā mahattvam icchadbhir na viyanti sma karhicit

(Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam1.16.26-29)

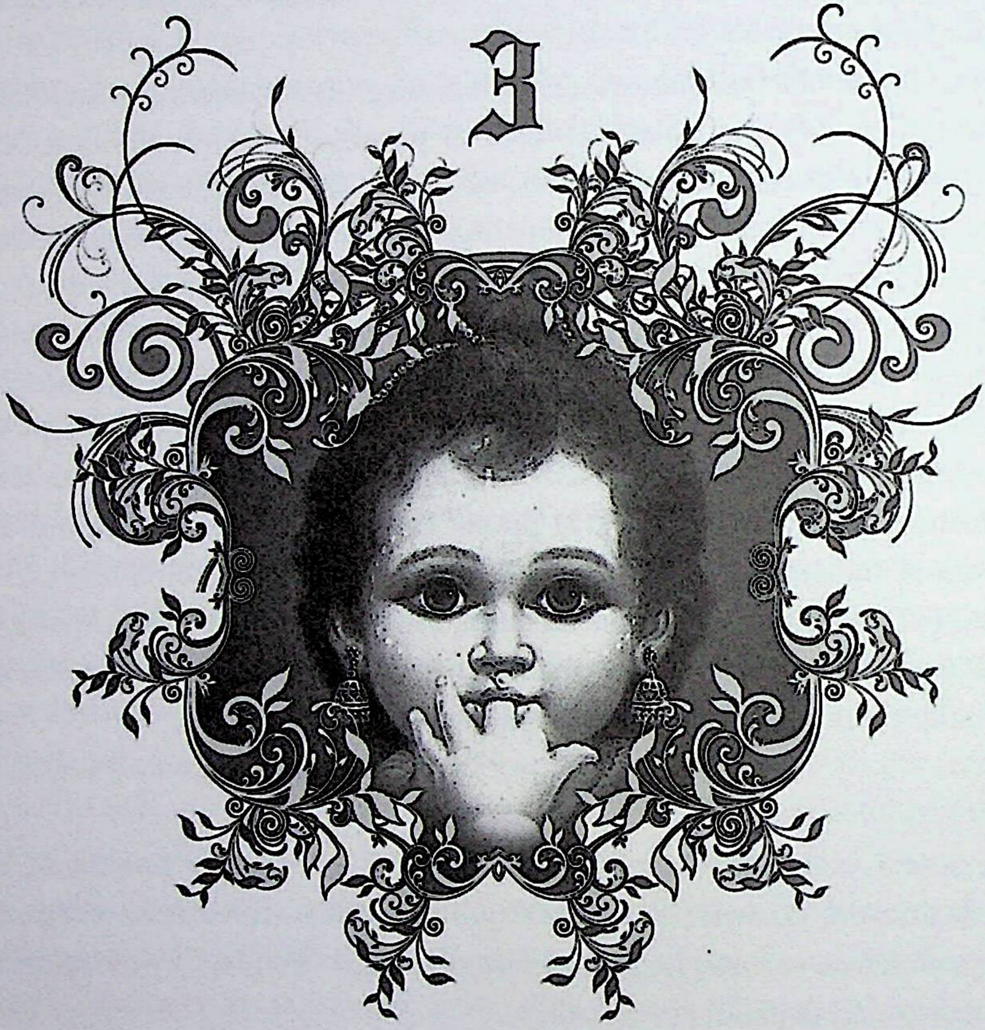
In Him reside (1) truthfulness, (2) cleanliness, (3) intolerance of another's unhappiness, (4) the power to control anger, (5) self-satisfaction, (6) straightforwardness, (7) steadiness of mind, (8) control of the sense organs, (9) responsibility, (10) equality, (11) tolerance, (12) equanimity, (13) faithfulness, (14) knowledge, (15) absence of sense enjoyment, (16) leadership, (17) chivalry, (18) influence, (19) the power to make everything possible, (20) the discharge of proper duty, (21) complete independence, (22) dexterity, (23) fullness of all beauty, (24) serenity, (25) kindheartedness, (26) ingenuity, (27) gentility, (28) magnanimity, (29) determination, (30) perfection in all knowledge, (31) proper execution, (32) possession of all objects of enjoyment, (33) joyfulness, (34) immovability, (35) fidelity, (36) fame, (37) worship, (38) pridelessness, (39) being (as the Personality of Godhead), (40) eternity, and many other transcendental qualities which are eternally present and never to be separated from Him."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.26-29)

The *śāstras* name eighteen principal faults that are never present in the Lord: illusion, laziness, error, cruelty, intense lust, fickleness, arrogance, envy, violence, sorrow, fatigue, dishonesty, anger, longing, fear, confusion, partiality, and dependency on others.

Even though they are altogether absent in the Lord, at the request of *bhakta-vātsalya* these qualities are present at times in various *avatāras*, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. By the influence of *bhakta-vātsalya* these faults are now appreciated by the devotees as excellent qualities."

3



The Greatness of Mother Yaśodā

This pastime of mother Yaśodā binding Lord Kṛṣṇa has glorified both Lord Kṛṣṇa and mother Yaśodā. The real power of love has been exposed here. The good fortune of mother Yaśodā has excelled that of everyone else. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, while describing this pastime to Parīkṣit Mahārāja has also mentioned the greatness of mother Yaśodā.

nemaṁ viriñco na bhavo
na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā
prasādaṁ lebhire gopī
yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt

Neither Lord Brahmā, nor Lord Śiva, nor even the goddess of fortune, who is always the better half of the Supreme Lord, can obtain from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the deliverer from this material world, such mercy as received by mother Yaśodā.

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.9.20)

In the commentary to this verse it has been stated, "This is a comparative study between mother Yaśodā and other devotees of the Lord. As stated in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi* 5.142), *ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya:* the only supreme master is Kṛṣṇa, and all others are His servants. Kṛṣṇa has the transcendental quality of *bhṛtya-vaśyatā,* becoming subordinate to His *bhṛtya,* or servant. Now, although everyone is *bhṛtya* and although Kṛṣṇa has the quality of becoming subordinate to His *bhṛtya,* the position of mother Yaśodā is the greatest. Lord Brahmā is *bhṛtya,* a servant of Kṛṣṇa, and he is *ādi-kavi,* the original creator of this universe (*tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-*

kavaye [SB 1.1.1]). Nonetheless, even he could not obtain such mercy as mother Yaśodā. As for Lord Śiva, he is the topmost Vaiṣṇava (*vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ*). What to speak of Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, is the Lord's constant companion in service, since she always associates with His body. But even she could not get such mercy. Therefore Mahārāja Parīkṣit was surprised, thinking, "What did mother Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja do in their previous lives by which they got such a great opportunity, the opportunity to be the affectionate father and mother of Kṛṣṇa?"...

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, while describing this pastime of the Lord and seeing the great fortune of mother Yaśodā, comments on the indescribable mercy she has received from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the giver of special *mukti* (love). Such mercy has not been received even by Lord Brahmā or Lord Śiva. Actually, what to speak of Śiva and Brahmā, even Lakṣmī-devī, who constantly resides on His chest, has not received such mercy as mother Yaśodā has received.

By what good fortune of Nanda and Yaśodā has Lord Śrī Hari developed so much eagerness or thirst for relishing their *vātsalya-prema?* He is so much controlled by their love that even just by hearing the chastisement of mother Yaśodā, He cries out in fear and is compelled to accept the binding. In this way her great fortune has been described. Lord Brahmā, the original guru of all devotees, Lord Śiva, the greatest example of Vaiṣṇavas, Lakṣmī-devī, His eternal consort, laying upon His chest, do not receive that *prasāda* of great *bhakti-yoga* or *prema.* Kṛṣṇa gives *mukti* but not *bhakti* to all.

muktiṁ dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam

"Those engaged in getting the Lord's favour attain liberation from the Lord very easily, but He does not very easily give the opportunity to render direct service unto Him."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.6.18)

Kṛṣṇa freely gives *mukti*. But here He is giving *vimukti*, a special *mukti*. What is so special? It is that indescribable thing which is the essence of *prema*, *prema-paripāka*, or the final stage of *prema*. Neither Brahmā, Śiva nor Lakṣmī receive this special mercy. In this verse Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has used "*na*" three times. By repeating "*na*" three times he emphasizes that it is not at all possible for anyone else, including Śiva, Brahmā and Lakṣmī, to receive the special mercy bestowed upon Mother Yaśodā. Even though Lakṣmī-devī is very close to the Lord and she has intense love for the Lord, her love is nevertheless "*tadīyatā-mayī*," which means "My Lord, I am yours." "I belong to my Lord." This is her mood. Here we see her *mamatā* or mood of ownership is mixed with knowledge of His opulence.

Here the mood of "mine" in relation to the Lord is dependent on His position as the Lord. In the case of mother Yaśodā, her *mamatā* or mood of "mine" is independent. This mood cannot be disturbed by any other mood. The mood of mother Yaśodā is, "Kṛṣṇa is mine. Kṛṣṇa knows nothing except me. I am His only shelter; it is my duty to see to the welfare of Kṛṣṇa." Within the heart of Yaśodā, deep concern for the welfare of Kṛṣṇa is more prominent. Here there is more *mamatā* or possessiveness. She does not understand anything about the opulence of Kṛṣṇa or His greatness, in the way that Lakṣmī-devī is aware of His opulence. Thus for the welfare of Kṛṣṇa she can chastise Him and she can bind Him. Kṛṣṇa is more merciful towards His mother.

Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, "What have Nanda and Yaśodā done to be so fortunate to get Kṛṣṇa as their son?"

nandaḥ kim akarod brahman
śreya evaṁ mahodayam
yaśodā ca mahā-bhāgā
papau yasyāḥ stanaṁ hariḥ

"O learned *brāhmaṇa*, mother Yaśodā's breast milk was sucked by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What past auspicious activities did she and Nanda Mahārāja perform to achieve such perfection in ecstatic love?"

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.46)

In answer, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī described that Nanda and Yaśodā were Dharā and Droṇa in their previous lives. They had engaged in severe austerity and Brahmā blessed them by which they appeared as Nanda and Yaśodā to receive the Lord as their son.

But in reality it is not by the mercy of Brahmā that Yaśodā has received this mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says that it is a great injustice to think that Yaśodā, who was Dharā during her previous life, being blessed by Brahmā, was able to become the mother of Kṛṣṇa. By the blessing of Brahmā one cannot attain this position and the great fortune of this elevated level of *prema*. Brahmā has prayed to take birth in Vraja as a creeper or some grass, just to attain the dust of the Vraja *gopīs:*

tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyāṁ
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam
yaj-jīvitaṁ tu nikhilaṁ bhagavān mukundas
tv adyāpi yat-pada-rajaḥ śruti-mṛgyam eva

"My greatest possible good fortune would be to take any birth whatever in this forest of Gokula and have my head bathed by the dust falling from the lotus feet of any of its residents. Their entire life and soul is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mukunda, the dust of whose lotus feet is still being searched for in the Vedic mantras."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.34)

Now Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī clarifies that Parīkṣit Mahārāja knew very well that Nanda and Yaśodā were the eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This means that no one can become Nanda and Yaśodā. Rather they eternally reside in Goloka and are the eternal father and mother of Kṛṣṇa. This was known to Parīkṣit Mahārāja from *śruti* and *smṛti*, but still he asked the question regarding the nature of the *tapasya* Nanda and Yaśodā had performed in order to receive such great fortune. In answer to this enquiry, Śukadeva told the pastime of Dharā and Droṇa, who are partial expansions of Nanda and Yaśodā. These partial expansions merged with Nanda and Yaśodā when they, with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, came to the earth planet.

Kṛṣṇa is *mukti-dātā*, or the giver of liberation. He is *vimukti-dātā*, or the giver of *prema*. Nevertheless, He did not give this *prema* to Brahmā who is the *ādi-guru*, the original spiritual master and His own son. Śiva who is the example for all Vaiṣṇavas and non-different from Him did not receive this mercy either. Śiva is greater than Brahmā, but Lakṣmī is greater than both Śiva and Brahmā, because Brahmā and Śiva are on the level of *dāsya-* and *sakhya-rasa* respectively while Lakṣmī is situated in *madhura-rasa*. Even though Lakṣmī-devī is in such an elevated position, her love is still not of the quality and intensity of mother Yaśodā's *prema*.

Now a question arises. Who can attain this degree of love that mother Yaśodā has for Kṛṣṇa and how can it be attained?

nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān
dehināṁ gopikā-sutaḥ
jñāninām cātma-bhūtānāṁ
yathā bhaktimatām iha

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.9.21)

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has said, "That son of *gopikā* Yaśodā cannot be achieved by people who are too much on the bodily platform, cannot be achieved by those who are *jñānīs*, known as *ātmārāmas* and thus beyond the bodily concept of life, and cannot be achieved by *ātma-bhūtas* like Śiva, Brahmā and Lakṣmī, who have appeared from Him."

Those who identify too much with the body and engage in austerity, cannot, by their austerity, achieve the love mother Yaśodā has for Kṛṣṇa. As it has been stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, devotion can only be achieved by the association of devotees.

etāvān eva yajatām
iha niḥśreyasodayaḥ
bhagavaty acalo bhāvo
yad bhāgavata-saṅgataḥ

"All the different kinds of worshipers of multidemigods can attain the highest perfectional benediction, which is spontaneous attraction unflinchingly fixed upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by the association of the pure devotee of the Lord."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.11)

Thus if by some chance somehow in some time someone comes in contact with a devotee of Lord then gradually he will get.

Jñānīs who are beyond the bodily platform of life cannot attain this perfection. Even for those who are *ātma-bhūtānām* (born from the Lord), it is still unattainable. This love can be achieved only by the association of devotees of the Lord, particularly the devotees of Gopikā-suta, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa can very easily achieve such *prema-bhakti*. Devotees of Mahā-Nārāyaṇa are excluded from the good fortune of developing the quality of love possessed by mother Yaśodā.

The *jñānīs* make the mistake of thinking that the cowherd boy of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is an ordinary boy, an ordinary living entity. Devotees of Nārāyaṇa think, "This Kṛṣṇa is Nārāyaṇa, who is exhibiting *gopa-līlā* or pastimes as a cowherd boy in Vraja, but The Lord's form as Nārāyaṇa and His pastimes as Nārāyaṇa are topmost." They think that Lord Nārāyaṇa has appeared as Kṛṣṇa for Vraja-līlā. For this reason they are not able to develop love and affection within their hearts for this Vraja Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. Actually this love is available to the devotees of Lord Nārāyaṇa, but only when they realise that these pastimes of Bāla Gopāla with the cowherd boys in the many forests of Vraja, are the topmost pastimes of the Lord. Only after developing affection for Him in this way will they attain this loving relationship.

One has to understand that Kṛṣṇa, as the son of mother Yaśodā, resides eternally on the topmost of all spiritual planets, and is the supreme object of love. Devotees who worship the son of *gopikā* Yaśodā will ultimately achieve the son of *gopikā* Yaśodā, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the spiritual world.

Here we see that the *sādhana* for obtaining this kind of *vātsalya-rasa* has been described, but one should not think that mother Yaśodā has received such love by performing some *sādhana*. She is *nitya-siddha,* the eternally perfect *nitya-pārṣada* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and has eternally possessed this degree of love for Kṛṣṇa. There was never a time when she did not have this love. The word *prāpti* or "received," used in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by Śukadeva Gosvāmī has been used to explain to people in a way they can understand (though she actually never receives *prema* since she eternally possesses it).

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains, "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes love of Godhead as the highest *puruṣārtha* or goal of life. *Nitya-siddha* devotees who originate from the *svarūpa-śakti* of the Lord have this *prema* eternally. Among all *nitya-siddha* devotees, His devotees in Gokula, like His father and mother etc. occupy the most elevated positions. Kṛṣṇa is always the object of their *vātsalya-prema*. Those devotees who follow in the footsteps of such Gokula-vāsīs or residents of Gokula will achieve *vātsalya-prema* very easily, but for others it will remain unattainable. Devotees attached to the bodily platform of life cannot develop this kind of *bhakti*. Devotees who are beyond the bodily platform of life also find it difficult to attain. So even for devotees, this eligibility to serve Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is not guaranteed, until and unless they enter into Vraja-bhakti by the association of Vraja-jana."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has described the meaning of *ātma-bhūtānām*. Speaking about Brahmā, Śiva and Lakṣmī he has said, "They are all *ātma-bhūta,* who have come directly from God. Brahmā and Śiva are incarnations of God, therefore they are *ātma-bhūta*. Lakṣmī-devī is His *svarūpa-śakti,* thus she is *ātma-bhūta*. If someone develops devotion to the Vraja-janas, who have accepted the mood of *sakhya, vātsalya* and *kānta-rasa* in Vraja, he can achieve Gopikā-suta Kṛṣṇa very easily. There is no other way to attain Him. Even Brahmā, Śiva and Lakṣmī-devī, although they are *ātma-bhūta,* cannot so easily grasp Kṛṣṇa. Why can they not feel the same intensity of love as mother Yaśodā?

Śrutis and *munis* achieved Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana by developing devotion, following in the footsteps of the *gopīs*, under their guidance. The *śrutis* and *munis* received Kṛṣṇa in Vraja in this way, but Brahmā, Śiva and Lakṣmī-devī did not. Brahmā, Śiva and Lakṣmī-devī, who are situated on their own planets, cannot accept the idea of following the cowherd girls of Vraja, since they perceive that this would diminish their positions. They cannot surrender to the cowherd girls of Vraja. Kṛṣṇa told Lakṣmī-devī, "You cannot surrender to the cowherd girls of Vraja, You are the queen of Vaikuṇṭha. You cannot enter the *rāsa-līlā*. I will place you on my chest and there you will remain."

mora putra, mora sakhā, mora prāṇa-pati
ei-bhāve yei more kare śuddha-bhakti
āpanāke baḍa māne, āmāre sama-hīna
sei bhāve ha-i āmi tāhāra adhīna

If one cherishes pure loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as his son, his friend or his beloved, regarding himself as great and considering Me his equal or inferior, I become subordinate to him.

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 4.21-22)

Section
TWO

4

The Glorious Pastime of Observing the Kārttika Vrata

There is an ancient story of a very learned *brāhmaṇa* who resided on top of the Saha mountain in the city of Kāverīpuram. His name was Dharmadatta. Once, during the month of Kārttika, he was on his way to a Viṣṇu temple to observe his *vrata* by remaining awake for the entire night. While he was walking to the temple, holding all the *pūjā* paraphernalia in his hand, Dharmadatta saw that a dreadful witch was coming towards him. Upon seeing the witch, Dharmadatta began trembling out of fear. Gathering some courage he threw the plate, holding all the *pūjā* paraphernalia, at the witch. As he threw it, he was remembering Lord Hari. Amongst the paraphernalia, there happened to be some water with *tulasī* leaves and as soon as that water touched the witch she was immediately freed from all her sins. She was suddenly able to remember all her previous life's *karma* for which she had received the body of a witch. She offered obeisances to the *brāhmaṇa* and said, "O, *brāhmaṇa*! I have achieved this condition due to the result of my previous *karma*. Please tell me how I can achieve a better destination."

Dharmadatta asked, "From what kind of *karma* have you attained this condition? Where are you from? What is your name? Tell me everything in detail."

The witch replied, "In my previous life I was the wife of a *brāhmaṇa* who was living in the city of Saurāṣṭra. My name was Kalahā. I was a very cruel-natured woman, never treating my husband well. What to speak of treating my husband well, I did not even speak a kind word to him. I never fed him good food, I was always deceptive and very fond of quarrelling. For this reason my husband was always in anxiety due to my actions. Finally he decided to marry a second wife and I committed suicide by drinking poison. The Yamadūtas then came and bound me, biting me as they dragged me to Yamaloka. There Yamarāja asked Citragupta, "Please check what kind of *karma* this person has performed and award her accordingly." Citragupta said, "This person has not performed any good *karma*. She would eat all the nicest foods alone, without sharing them with her husband. She was always adverse to her husband. For this reason she will take birth as a vampire bird. She was always fond of quarrelling, for this reason she will take birth as a stool-eating pig. She used to eat alone from the same pot which she used for cooking, for this reason she will take birth as a cat who eats her own baby. She has committed suicide, accusing her husband, for this reason she will remain for some time alone in the form of a witch. She should be sent by the Yamadūtas to a place where there is no water, and she should remain there for a lengthy period in this form of a witch, and following this she will suffer in three different lives."

The witch said, "Oh, Vipravara! I am that most sinful Kalahā who is standing here in front of you in this form of a witch. I have already spent five hundred years in this body. I came up here to the confluence of the Kṛṣṇā and Veṇī rivers by possessing the body of a businessman. As soon as I reached the confluence, the associates of Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu forcibly removed me from the body of this businessman. Since then I have been wandering hither and thither, suffering from great hunger and thirst. Now, upon seeing me, you threw your *pūjā* plate at me, and the water and *tulasī* touched me, freeing me from all my sins. O great *brāhmaṇa*, please advise me, how can I become free from this degraded form of a witch and how can I avert the suffering due to me in my next three births?"

After hearing this description of Kalahā's past life, Dharmadātta thought for some time and then said, "By performing *sat-karma* like charity, *vratas* and so on in the holy *dhāma*, people are freed from their sins. But you are in this *pretā* (witch) body, and therefore you are not qualified to perform these

activities. For this reason I will give you half of the pious credits which I have gathered by performing Kārttika *vrata* throughout my entire life since childhood. This will certainly guarantee you a better situation." Having spoken these words, Dharmadatta sprinkled water with *tulasī* leaves upon the witch while chanting the *dvādaśākṣara-mantra* or the twelve-syllable mantra.

As soon as that *tulasī* water touched the witch and she heard the mantra, she was released form that pretā body and appeared in the form of a beautiful *devī*. Her beauty was comparable to the beauty of Lakṣmī-devī. She then fell on the ground to offer her obeisances and spoke in great ecstasy, "O, best among the *brāhmaṇas*! By your mercy, today I have been freed from this hellish life. I was drowning in an ocean of sins. You came like a boat to deliver me from this ocean of sins." As she was addressing the *brāhmaṇa*, she could see an effulgent chariot descending from the sky, carrying two Viṣṇudūtas, named Puṇyaśīla and Suśīla. They were standing at the door of the chariot and carefully picked up the beautiful *devī*, placing her on the chariot with them. Dharmadatta was greatly surprised to see the chariot and he immediately offered prostrated obeisances to the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu. Puṇyaśīla and Suśīla picked Dharmadatta up from the ground and said, "Oh, best among the *brāhmaṇas*!

Thank you so much, because you are always engaged in *hari-bhajana* and merciful upon fallen and unfortunate souls. You observe all *viṣṇu-vratas*, and by giving half of the result of the Kārttika-vrata which you have performed since your childhood, you have freed this person from all sins and at the same time the result of your Kārttika-vrata has doubled. Now I am taking her to Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma. At the end of your life you will also go to Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma along with your two wives. Dharmadatta!

Whoever performs worship of Lord Viṣṇu with devotion, like you, is blessed and his life is successful. If someone worships Lord Viṣṇu nicely there is nothing that the Lord will not give him. He gave Dhruvaloka to Dhruva

Mahārāja, the son of Uttānapāda. All living entities are delivered just by remembering His holy name. Previously the king of the elephants was delivered by the Lord just by remembering His name when he was attacked by a crocodile. The Kārttika-vrata which you have observed since your birth, for the pleasure of Lord Viṣṇu, is the greatest sacrifice. No *yajña*, no charity or *tīrtha* is equal to this Kārttika-vrata. You are truly blessed. Because you have observed Kārttika-vrata which is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu, and given half the result of this Kārttika-vrata to this lady, she is now going with us to the abode of the Lord, Vaikuṇṭha-loka.

ऽ

Guṇavatī Appeared as Satyabhāmā by Performing the Dāmodara-vrata

This pastime took place during the end of Satya-yuga. There was a *brāhmaṇa* living in Haridvāra, named Devaśarmā. He appeared in the dynasty of Atri and was very expert in the knowledge of the *Vedas*. He was very nicely situated but he had no son. He had only one daughter whose name was Guṇavatī. Devaśarmā arranged for Guṇavatī to marry one of his disciples named Candra. Candra was very obedient and had full control of his senses. He was respectful and served Devaśarmā like his father.

One day both Devaśarmā and Candra went to the forest to collect auspicious ingredients like *kuśa* grass, for a *yajña*. While in the forest, they came across a fearsome demon who killed both of them. Due to their pious credits in devotional service, both went back to Vaikuṇṭha. When Guṇavatī heard about the death of her father and husband she began to cry pitifully in separation from them. She sold various items from her house and performed a *śrāddha* ceremony according to her capacity. She then continued to live in that city, although socially she was dead. She observed two *vratas* throughout her life, Ekādaśī-vrata and Kārttika-vrata.

Every year without fail she observed Kārttika-vrata. One year she was extremely sick and due to her illness she became very weak. She was also suffering from fever. Somehow, due to her determination, she still managed to reach the Gaṅgā to take bath. As soon as she entered the water, her body went into shock from the cold and she fell to the ground trembling. In that helpless condition she suddenly saw a chariot descending from the sky. She then left her material body, boarded the chariot in her spiritual body and went to Vaikuṇṭha-loka, where she stayed near Lord Viṣṇu due to the pious results of her performing Kārttika-vrata.

By the prayer of the demigods, including Brahmā, the Lord later appeared on the earth planet in His form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When the Lord comes to perform His pastimes, all His associates also come with Him. All the members of the Yadu-vaṁśa were associates of the Lord. Guṇavatī appeared as Satyabhāmā. Her father in her previous life, Devaśarmā, appeared as Satrājit, the father of Satyabhāmā, and her husband in her previous life, Candra, appeared as Akrūra. Due to the result of her performance of Kārttika-vrata, Guṇavatī became very dear to the Lord and appeared as Satyabhāmā to give pleasure to the Lord. In her previous life she had planted a *tulasī* garden in front of her house. As a result of that, she now had a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree in front of her house.

Once Satyabhāmā said, "My Lord, I am blessed. My life is successful by attaining You as my husband. My Lord, please tell me, in my previous life what kind of pious activities did I perform that I could be so fortune to become Your wife on this earth planet? Please tell me who I was in my previous life and what I was like."

In reply to this enquiry of Satyabhāmā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa described the events of her previous life. The Lord said, "Just by performing Kārttika-vrata, you have attained Me as your husband."

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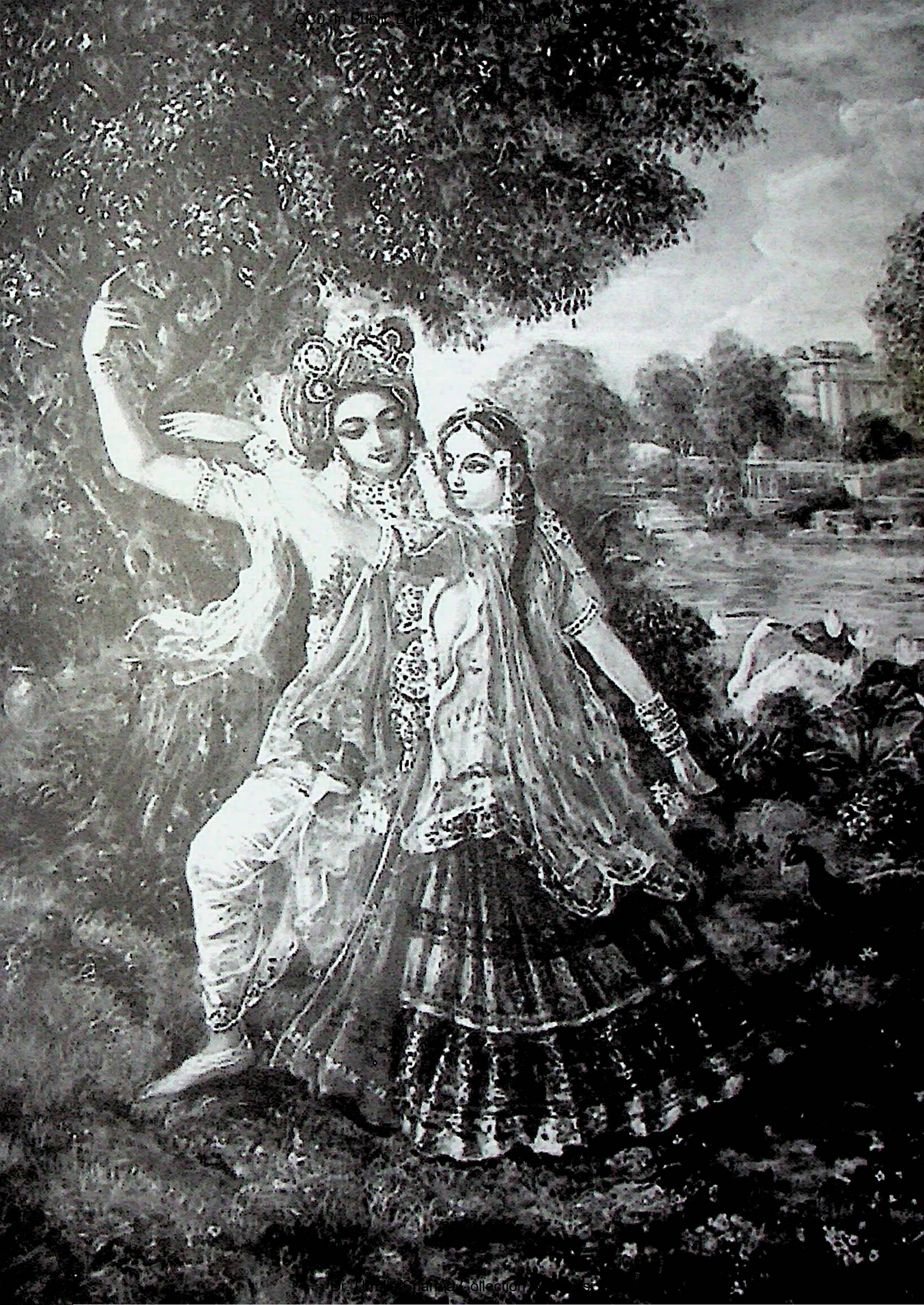

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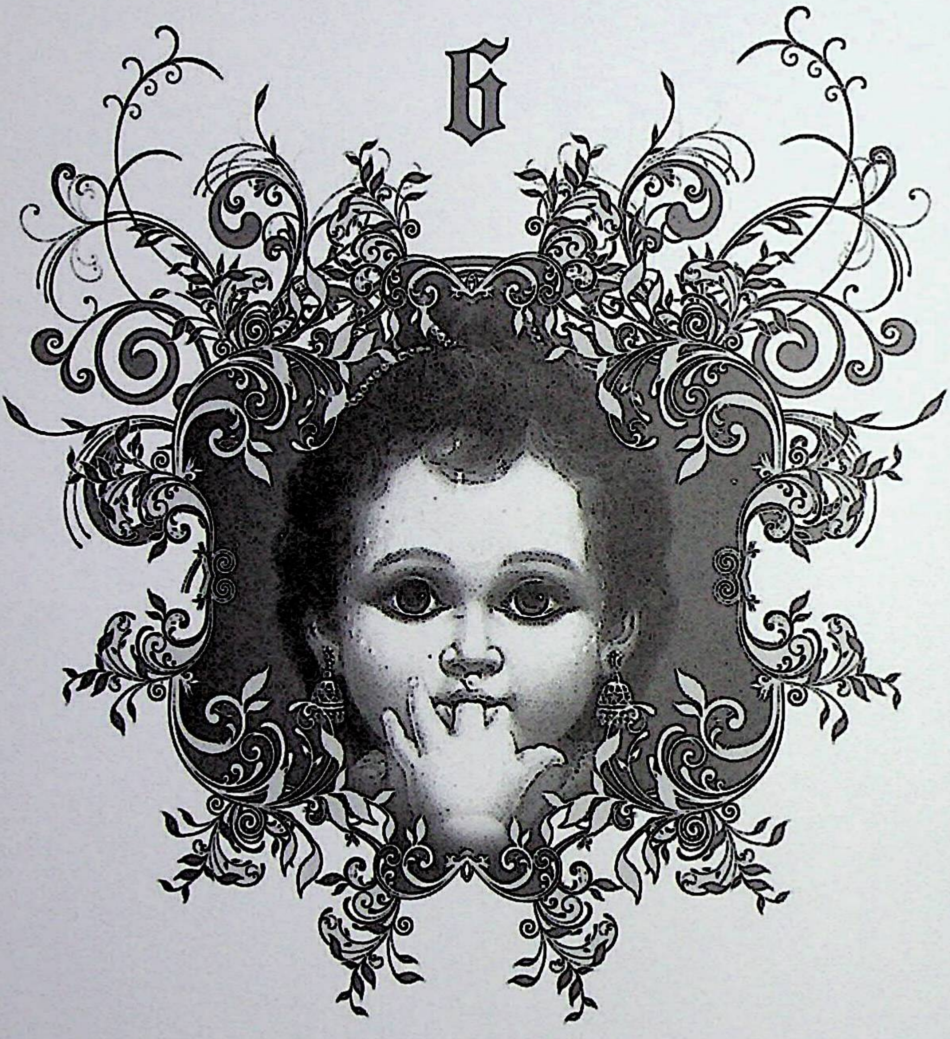

A Most Fallen Lady Delivered by Observing Kārttika-vrata

In ancient times there was a *brāhmaṇa* by the name of Buddhu in the state of Draviḍa. His wife was very wicked and was engaged in all kinds of sinful activities. Due to her association, her husband's life span was reduced and he died prematurely. After the death of her husband she became even more adulterous and felt no shame even though she was criticised by her community. She had no son or brother and sustained herself by begging rice. She never cooked for herself and often ate rice which had been cooked the previous day. Furthermore, she never visited any holy places nor heard any *Purāṇas*.

One day a *brāhmaṇa* named Kutsa, who was performing *tīrtha-yātrā*, came to her house. When Kutsa saw that this lady was fully engrossed in adulterous activities, he felt compassion for her and said, "Oh, foolish woman! You must listen to my advice very carefully and attentively. Why are you maintaining this material body which is made of five elements such as earth, water etc. and which is filled with puss and blood?

This body is like a water bubble and one day it must be destroyed. If you accept this temporary body as eternal, then through proper understanding you must remove this misconception which has been sitting within your mind. You should meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and listen to His pastimes with great attention. During the month of Kārttika, for the pleasure of Lord Viṣṇu, you should take an early bath daily, give charity, offer a lamp, circumambulate Lord Viṣṇu and offer *praṇāmas* to Him. All these activities will free you from the reactions to the many sinful activities you have committed." Having spoken these words, Kutsa *brāhmaṇa* left her house.

After hearing the instructions of Kutsa, the *brāhmaṇī* began to repent for all her sinful activities and decided to observe the Kārttika-vrata. When the month of Kārttika started, she observed the Kārttika-vrata by taking early morning bath and offering a lamp daily to Lord Viṣṇu. Then after some time, when her lifespan was finished, she left her body. After her death she was promoted to the heavenly planets and after enjoying heavenly pleasure she was liberated. Any person who observes the Kārttika-vrata and offers a lamp every day will be delivered by hearing this pastime.

7

Importance of the Āmalakī Tree in the Month of Kārttika

It has been stated in the scriptures that during the month of Kārttika, on the Caturdaśī during the *śukla- pakṣa,* one should worship the *āmalakī* tree, as this great tree removes all sins. This Caturdaśī is known as Vaikuṇṭha-caturdaśī, and it is recommended that on this day one should worship Śrī Hari along with Śrī Rādhā under the shadow of an *āmalakī* tree. One should then circumambulate the tree one hundred and eight times and offer obeisances and prayers to Lord Śyāmasundara, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After offering prayers, one should sit down under the *āmalakī* tree and listen to the glories of *āmalakī.* Finally, one should feed some *brāhmaṇas* and offer them *dakṣiṇā,* as pleasing the *brāhmaṇas* gives pleasure to Lord Śrī Hari, who is the giver of liberation. Appearance of the *āmalakī* tree:

At the beginning of creation, the entire universe was submerged under water. At that time Lord Brahmā began chanting the holy name of the Lord. Out of ecstasy due to eagerness to see the Lord, tears fell from Brahmā's eyes. That water which consisted of his tears of love fell on the earth planet. From these tears, the *āmalakī* tree appeared and developed into a huge tree, expanding its branches and subbranches, and was laden with *āmalakī* fruits. The *āmalakī* tree appeared first, before any other tree, and is therefore known as "*ādiruha*". "*Ādi*" means original and "*ruha*" means tree. After the creation of the *āmalakī* tree, all other living entities were created. When the *devas* were created they all came to the place where Lord Viṣṇu's favourite tree, the *āmalakī,* was born. They were surprised to see the *āmalakī* tree. Just then, a voice from the sky proclaimed to the demigods, "This *āmalakī* tree is the best among all trees, because it is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu. Just by remembering this tree one will achieve the result of giving a cow in charity. By taking *darśana* of this tree one will double this result. By eating the fruit of this tree one will triple this result. One should always serve the *āmalakī* tree very carefully, because this tree is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu and has the power to destroy all sins. One should worship the *āmalakī* tree for the fulfilment of all one's desires. Whoever worships Lord Śrī Hari in forests of *āmalakī* during the month of Kārttika, and takes *prasāda* under the shadow of this tree, will be free from all kinds of sins. Any pious activities performed under the shadow of the *āmalakī* tree will give millions of times the benefit.

Long, long ago there was a great *brāhmaṇa* named Devaśarmā, who was living on the northern bank of the Kāverī River. He was very expert in all the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*. Unfortunately he had a son who was a great *durācārī*, a notorious person devoid of any good behaviour. One day Devaśarmā, for the benefit of his son, advised him, "O, my dear son! Now it is the month of Kārttika which is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu. You should follow all the rules, take an early bath daily, give charity, and follow a *vrata* during this month. You should worship Lord Viṣṇu with *tulasī mañjarīs*. Offer a lamp to the Lord, offer obeisances and circumambulate Lord Śrī Hari." When that wicked boy heard this advice from his father he became very angry. His lips began to tremble in anger and he rebuked and blasphemed his father, saying, "Father! I do not need the *puṇya* of performing a Kārttika-vrata. I will not observe this Kārttika-vrata." After hearing this kind of loose talk from his son, Devaśarmā with great anger said, "O less intelligent! I curse you to become a rat and reside in the trunk of a tree."

Upon hearing this curse from his father, the boy became very afraid. He offered his obeisance to his father and asked, "Please tell me how I can become free from that species of life? How long will I remain in the form of a rat?" After hearing this gentle speech of his son, Devaśarmā was pleased and said, "When you hear the glories of Kārttika-vrata, which is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu, you will be liberated." After hearing this from his father he immediately transformed into the form of a rat and stayed in a dense forest for many years. One day, in the month of Kārttika, Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi along with his followers came to the same forest. They took bath in the river and worshiped Lord Hari, after which they took shelter of the shade of an *āmalakī* tree. There Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi began to describe the glories of the month of Kārttika as his disciples sat nearby to listen.

There happened to be a hunter roaming the forest at that time. He was particularly vicious, with a desire to kill not only animals but saintly people as well. However, when he came upon the great *mahātmā*, Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi and his disciples, he suddenly developed some intelligence. He offered his obeisances to Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi and asked, "What are you all doing here?" Viśvāmitra replied, "This Kārttika month is the best among all months. Any work done in this month grows like a huge banyan tree. If someone performs pious activities by taking an early morning bath, giving charity, worshiping and feeding *brāhmaṇas* in this month he achieves *akṣaya* or an imperishable result."

When Viśvāmitra thus described these glories of the month of Kārttika at the request of the hunter, the cursed son of Devaśarmā who was there in the form of a rat also heard this description. As soon as Viśvāmitra concluded his speech, the son of the *brāhmaṇa* who was hearing the glories of Kārttika-vrata immediately transformed, taking on a beautiful, celestial form. He offered his obeisances to Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi and explained his story, and then departed for the heavenly planets.

After witnessing this extraordinary event, both Viśvāmitra and the hunter were very surprised. The hunter then observed Kārttika-vrata and went back to Vaikuṇṭha-loka. This narration clearly illustrates the importance of hearing the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa while sitting under the shade of an *āmalakī* tree during the month of Kārttika. By offering lamps to Śrī Hari while sitting under the *āmalakī* tree one will accumulate unlimited *puṇya* or pious results.

8

The Glories of Tulasī-pūjā in the Month of Kārttika

This is an ancient incident, involving two *brāhmaṇas* from the state of Kāśmīra, Sumedha and Harimedha. They were both great Viṣṇu-bhaktas and always engaged in devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu. They were also very merciful towards all living entities and understood all truths properly. At one time, these two *brāhmaṇas* started their journey of pilgrimage, and eventually came across a garden of *tulasī* plants. At this point they were exhausted from the day's walking, but immediately upon seeing *tulasī*, Sumedha circumambulated the garden and offered his obeisances very respectfully. Seeing this, Harimedha asked Sumedha about the glories of *tulasī* and what the result of offering *praṇāma* to *tulasī* was. Sumedha said, "It is too hot here due to the direct sunshine, let us go take shelter of that banyan tree. There, in the shade of the banyan tree, I will tell you everything."

Sumedha then began, "Long, long ago, Indra, the king of heaven, had lost his position due to the curse of Durvāsā Muni. At that time Brahmā and all the demigods, as well as all the demons, were engaged in churning the milk ocean. From that churning of the milk ocean, many wonderful beings and items emerged, such as the elephant Airāvata, the Kalpa-vṛkṣa tree, Candramā or the moon, Lakṣmī, the horse Uccaiḥśravā and the Kaustubha gem. Lord Hari in the form of Dhanvantari also appeared, along with all celestial medicines and *amṛta* or nectar. As Lord Viṣṇu was holding that pot of nectar, which has the power to make one immortal, He felt great happiness. Due to feeling such pleasure, tears began to fall from His eyes and some tears fell into the pot of nectar.

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Sumedha then began, "Long, long ago, Indra, the king of heaven, had lost his position due to the curse of Durvāsā Muni. At that time Brahmā and all the demigods, as well as all the demons, were engaged in churning the milk ocean. From that churning of the milk ocean, many wonderful beings and items emerged, such as the elephant Airāvata, the Kalpa-vṛkṣa tree, Candramā or the moon, Lakṣmī, the horse Uccaiḥśravā and the Kaustubha gem. Lord Hari in the form of Dhanvantari also appeared, along with all celestial medicines and *amṛta* or nectar. As Lord Viṣṇu was holding that pot of nectar, which has the power to make one immortal, He felt great happiness. Due to feeling such pleasure, tears began to fall from His eyes and some tears fell into the pot of nectar.

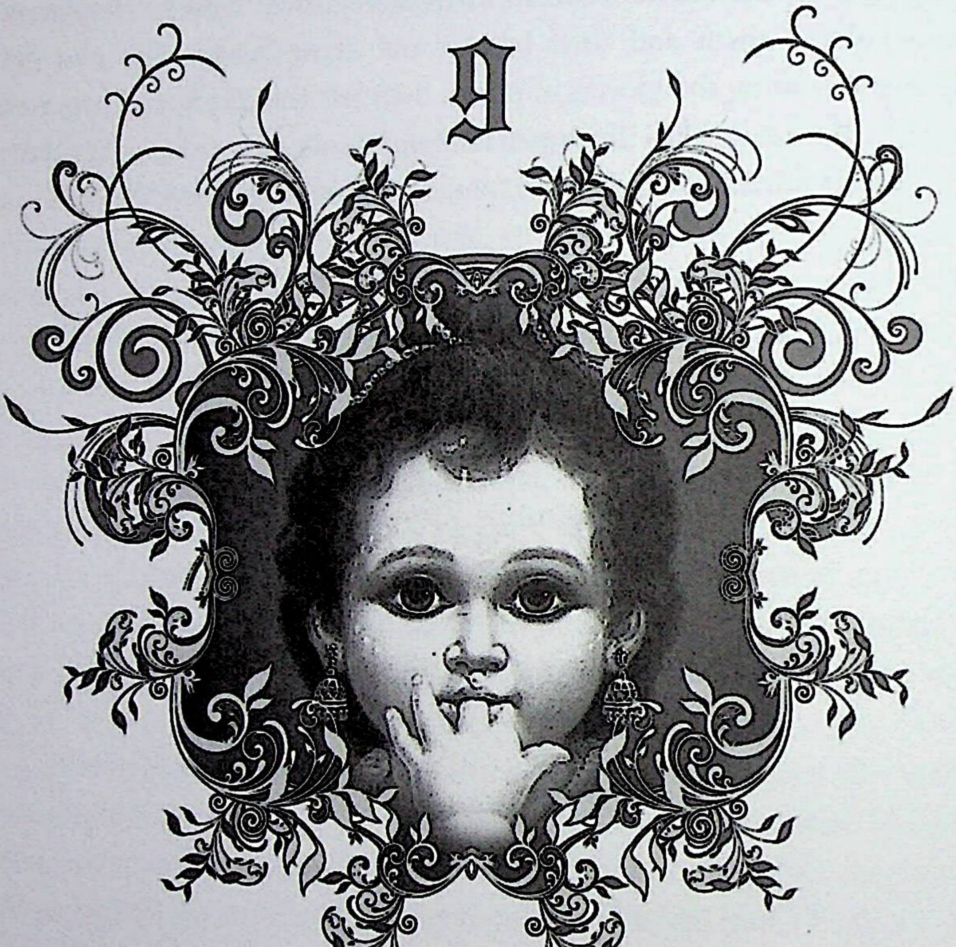
The very moment this happened, *tulasī* appeared from the pot. All the demigods along with Brahmā, offered *tulasī* and Lakṣmī to Lord Śrī Hari, which He accepted with great pleasure. Since then *tulasī* has been very dear to Lord Viṣṇu, who is the protector of the entire universe. *tulasī* is His dearmost, therefore I offered her my obeisances." As Sumedha was giving the explanation they saw an effulgent chariot racing across the sky towards them.

Just then the banyan tree under which they were sitting was uprooted and two celestial beings appeared from within it. They shone as bright as the sun and lit all the directions. They offered their obeisances to Sumedha and Harimedha, who were surprised and quite overwhelmed. They asked, "Who are you both? Your bodies appear very auspicious, like the *devatās*." Hearing this, the two effulgent personalities spoke, "Oh, great *brāhmaṇas!* You are our father, mother, guru, friend and everything to us." One of them said, "My name is Astika, I am a resident of Devaloka. One day I went to Nandana-kānana to play, where I engaged in pleasurable activities with many celestial ladies for as long as they desired. At that time the necklace of pearls and *belī* flowers from one of the ladies, fell on Lomaśa Ṛṣi who was engaged in *tapasya* at that place. Upon seeing this, Lomaśa Muni became very angry and he wanted to curse her. But after consideration he thought, "Ladies have no independence, they always depend on others, therefore this wicked Astika should be punished." He then cursed me, saying, "You shall become a *brahma- rākṣasa* and reside in a banyan tree." After hearing this curse placed upon me, I approached the *muni* very humbly and asked him, "O, great sage! Please tell me how long I will remain as a *brahma-rākṣasa* and how can I be delivered from this curse?" Being pleased with my humility, the *muni* said, "When you hear the holy name of Lord Viṣṇu and the glories of *tulasī* from the mouth of a *brāhmaṇa* then you will immediately be released from this curse and be liberated." Since then I have been residing in this banyan tree as a *brahma-rākṣasa* in a miserable condition. Today, having had *darśana* of both of you, I have been delivered from the curse of Lomaśa Muni.

"Now please hear about my friend. He was a great *muni* and always engaged in the service of his guru. Once he disobeyed the order of his most respectable guru and thus became a *brahma-rākṣasa*. Today by your mercy he has also been delivered."

Having told their stories, both of them offered obeisances to the two *brāhmaṇas*, circumabulated them and then left for the *divya-dhāma*. The two great *brāhmaṇas*, reciting the glories of *tulasī*, then left that place and proceeded on their *tīrtha-yātrā*. This illustrates the importance of worshipping *tulasī* in the month of Kārttika, which gives immense pleasure to Lord Viṣṇu.

9



The Glories of Offering an Ākāśa-dīpa in the Month of Kārttika[1]

It is very auspicious to offer an *ākāśa* lamp during the month of Kārttika. Every day, after taking an early morning bath and also every evening, one should offer this *ākāśa-dīpa*. By performing this auspicious activity one will live in this world happily and finally achieve liberation.

Mahārāja Sunanda observed this Kārttika *vrata* for the entire month on the advice of a *brāhmaṇa* named Candraśarmā. He regularly took an early morning bath and worshiped Lord Viṣṇu with soft *tulasī* leaves. Every evening he offered an *ākāśa-dīpa*. While offering the lamp, he chanted the following mantra:

dāmodarāya viśvāya viśva-rūpa-dharāya ca
namaskṛtvā pradasyāmi vyoma-dīpaṁ hari-priyam

"I offer my obeisance to Lord Dāmodara who has accepted a universal form and offer this *ākāśa-dīpa* which is very dear to Lord Hari. Oh my Lord, let me achieve devotion unto You by observing this *vrata*."

King Sunanda offered a lamp to the Lord daily, in this mood of devotion. He would get up at *brāhma-muhūrta,* in the early morning and again offer the *ākāśa* lamp. In this way Sunanda observed this Kārttika *vrata* throughout the month, following all the rules and regulations. As a result of this he enjoyed his life along with his family and at the end of his life he went back to Godhead.

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[1] **Ākāśa-dīpa or "sky lamp" is a lamp in a clay pot which is suspended in the air by hoisting it along a length of bamboo.**

10

Utthāna Ekādaśī in the Month of Kārttika

In ancient times there was a demon named Śaṅkha who was the son of Sāgara or the ocean. He forcefully took control of all the planets, including Indraloka. All the demigods had fled their planets and were hiding in a cave due to fear of this demon. The demon Śaṅkha thought, "Even though I have conquered all demigods, they still appear very powerful." He realised that the demigods derived their power from Vedic mantras, and thought, "I will plunder the *Vedas* so that all these demigods will become weak." With this consciousness, the demon Śaṅkha plundered all the *Vedas* from Satyaloka, the planet of Brahmā. While being taken by this demon, the personified *Vedas*, being afraid, ran away, escaping his control, and merged into the water along with *yajña,* mantra and all its seeds. The demon Śaṅkha entered into the ocean in search of the *Vedas*, but could not find them anywhere.

During this time the Lord, who was sleeping, was approached by the demigods offering Him prayers. Upon hearing their prayers, the Lord awoke and said, "O, demigods! I, being pleased by your prayers, want to give you a boon. You have woken Me on the Ekādaśī *tithi* of *śukla-pakṣa* (waxing moon) in the month of Kārttika. For this reason this *tithi* is very pleasant and respected by Me. The *Vedas* which were stolen by the demon Śaṅkha have been merged into the ocean. I will kill this demon Śaṅkha and bring you the *Vedas*. During this month of Kārttika, anyone who takes an early morning bath should be considered as having taken bath in *avabhṛtha* (the sanctified water) of the *yajña*. From today, I will reside in the water during the month of Kārttika. All you demigods along with the *munis*, please come with me into the water." Having said this, the Lord accepted the form of a fish and entered into the water from the sky. After killing the demon, Śaṅkha, the Lord came to the forest of Badarī or Badarikāśrama in the Himālayas. There He ordered all the *ṛṣis*, "Munīśvaras! All of you should immediately enter into the ocean and collect all the Vedic mantras from the water. In the mean time I, along with all the demigods, will stay in Prayāga."

After receiving this order from the Lord all the *mahārṣis*, by dint of their austerity, rescued the Vedic mantras along with all *yajñas* and other mantras. From that day, the *ṛṣis* became connected to the particular mantras that they rescued and each became known as the *ṛṣi* of that mantra.

Then all the *ṛṣis* went together to Prayāga to meet the Lord. There they offered all the Vedic mantras to Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Brahmā. Brahmā was very happy to retrieve all the *Vedas* and he, along with all the *devas* and *ṛṣis*, performed an *aśvamedha-yajña* at Prayāga.

Section
THREE

11

Karttik vrata

(There are different description about glories of Karttik vrata and different rules and regulations to be followed during the month of Karttik. Srila Sanatana Goswami has described about Karttik vrata in Haribhaktivilash quoting from different Puranas like Skhanda puran, Padma purana etc. Following is some portion of those descriptions down loaded from websites.)

Glories of Karttik vrata

"All holy places, yajñas, dakṣiṇās, residence in Puṣkara, Kurukṣetra, and the Himalayas, and all giving in charity a pile of gold like Mount Meru, reside in Kārttika, Lord Kṛṣṇa's favorite month.

"The service one does to Lord Viṣṇu in the month of Kārttika is all eternal. O Nārada, I tell you the truth.

"Kārttika is the best of months, the most pious of pious deeds, the most purifying of all that purify."

na kārttika-samo māso
na kṛtena samaṁ yugam
na veda-sādṛśaṁ śāstraṁ
na tīrthaṁ gaṅgayā samam

"No month is like Kārttika. No yuga is like Satya-yuga. No scripture is like the Vedas. No holy place is like the Gaṅgā.

"Kārttika is the best of months. Kārttika is always dear to the Vaiṣṇavas.

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"Kārttika is the best of months. Kārttika is always dear to the Vaiṣṇavas.

O great sage, a Vaiṣṇava who with devotion serves Kārttika delivers his ancestors from hell.

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"Of the twelve months, Kārttika is the most dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. To anyone who even slightly worships Lord Viṣṇu during its time, the month of Kārttika gives residence in Lord Viṣṇu's transcendental abode.

"As everyone knows, Lord Dāmodara loves His devotees. Lord Dāmodara's month, the month of Kārttika, also loves the devotees. The month of Kārttika thinks even the slightest devotional service is very big and important.

dīpenāpi hi yatrāsau
prīyate harir īśvaraḥ
su-gītaṁ ca dadāty eva
para-dīpa-prabodhanāt

"Lord Kṛṣṇa is pleased by the offering of a single lamp during the month of Kārttika. Lord Kṛṣṇa glorifies anyone who lights a lamp for someone else to offer."

The Glories of Specific Pious Activities Performed During Kārttika

In the Skanda Purāṇa it is said:

"Charity, yajña, japa, and austerity performed in the month of Kārttika bring a result, O best of brāhmaṇas, that will never be destroyed."

It is further said:

"O Nārada, I have personally seen that a person who happily reads Bhagavadgīta' during the month of Kārttika does not return to the world of birth and death."

"A person who during the month of Kārttika reads the thousand holy names of Lord Hari and the story of Gajendra's liberation does not take birth again.

"O great sage, please give up all other religious practice and simply hear the sacred scriptures in the presence of the Deity of Lord Keśava during the month of Kārttika.

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"During the month of Kārttika one should sleep on the floor, remain celibate, eat haviṣya from a palāśa-leaf plate, and worship Lord Dāmodara. In this way one becomes free of all sins, goes to the spiritual world, attains a spiritual body like the Lord's, and enjoys the bliss of directly serving Lord Hari."

It is further said:

"A person who, for the entire month of Kārttika rises early, bathes, controls his senses, remains peaceful, chants japa, and eats only haviṣya, becomes free from all sins.

"A person who, for the entire month of Kārttika, eats only once a day becomes very famous, powerful, and heroic."

It is further said:

"A person who during the month of Kārttika eats from a palāśa-leaf plate becomes free from all sins. A person who eats the remnants of food offered to Lord Hari attains liberation. A person who is not a qualified brāhmaṇa should not eat from the middle leaf of the palāśa tree."

It is further said:

"Lord Hari, the all-powerful Supreme Personality of Godhead forgives thousands of offenses and a host of terrible sins committed by one who worships Him during the month of Kārttika.

"A person who to Lord Viṣṇu offers delicious pāyasa made with sugar and ghee, and then eats the remnants left by the Lord, attains the result of performing every day a great yajña.

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains to Satyabhāmā:

"They who during the month of Kārttika bathe, keep an all-night vigil, offer lamps, and protect a tulasī forest, attain spiritual forms like Lord Viṣṇu's.

"They who for three days do these pious deeds are offered all respects by the demigods. What, then, can be said of those who have performed these pious deeds for their entire lives?

Glories of Akash dvip

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"A person who places a great lamp high in the sky during the month of Kārttika takes all his relatives with him to Viṣṇuloka.

A Mantra for Offering a Lamp in the Sky

In the scriptures it is said:

"Reciting the mantra 'namo 'nantāya vedhase' (Obeisances to the unlimited, to the Supreme Creator), the devotees offer a lamp to Lord Dāmodara and the goddess of fortune in the sky.

The Glories of Observing the Kārttika Vow in Certain Specific Places

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"Wherever one may be, by bathing, giving charity, or especially by worshiping the Lord during the month of Kārttika one attains the result of performing an agnihotra-yajña.

"Observing the vow of Kārttika brings a result ten million times greater when performed at Kurukṣetra or by the Gaṅgā's shore. The result is even greater at Puṣkara-tīrtha. Bathing and worship at Dvāraka' during the month of Kārttika carries one to the abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

"O sages, other holy cities bring similar results. The district of Mathurā, however, is different, because Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed His Dāmodara pastimes in the district of Mathurā.

"Observing the vow of Kārttika in Mathura' brings love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. In this way the best result is obtained in Mathurā.

"As Prayāga should be served in the month of Māgha (January-February), and as the Gaṅga' should be served in the month of Vaiśākha (April-May), so Mathura' should be served in the month of Kārttika. Nothing is better than service to Mathura' in Kārttika.

"They who bathe and then worship Lord Dāmodara in Mathura' during the month of Kārttika attain spiritual forms like Lord Kṛṣṇa's. Of this there is no doubt.

"O brāhmaṇa, it is rare that one is allowed to spend the month of Kārttika in Mathurā. To they who worship Him in Mathura' during Kārttika, Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals His own transcendental form.

“To the devotees who worship Him in other places, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives happiness and liberation, but He does not give devotional service, for devotional service turns Him into His devotee’s servant.

“Still, one can very easily attain devotional service by once worshiping Lord Dāmodara in Mathura’ during Kārttika.

Duties in the month of Kārttika to be Performed

In the Kārttika-māhātmya, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Satyabhāmā:

“One should diligently follow the vow of Kārttika, which begins on the śukla-ekādaśī of the month of Aśvina.

“In this vow one should rise at the end of night, waken the Deity with prayers, and then offer ārati.

“In the company of the Vaiṣṇavas in the morning one should happily hear about the religion of devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu, sing songs glorifying Lord Viṣṇu, and offer ārati to Lord Viṣṇu.

“Then one should go to a river or other source of water, perform ācamana, recite the saṅkalpa mantra, recite the prārthana’ mantra, and then properly offer arghya to the Lord.

“O Lord Dāmodara, O Lord who rescues the devotees from sufferings, O master of the demigods, to please You and Goddess Rādhā, I shall bathe every morning during the month of Kārttika.”

The parts of the Kārttika vow are: 1. Keeping an all-night vigil for the sake of Lord Hari, 2. bathing early in the morning, 3. serving Tulasī, 4. properly concluding the vow, and 5. offering a lamp.

A person who follows these five vows during the month of Kārttika attains the full result of happiness and liberation, which has already been described in this book.

“In a Viṣṇu temple, a Śiva temple, at the root of a banyan tree, or in a Tulasī forest, one should keep an all-night vigil for Lord Hari’s sake.

“If, because of disease or misfortune, one is not able to bathe with water, he should bathe by chanting the holy names of Lord Viṣṇu.

“If one is not able to bring the vow to its conclusion with an elaborate ritual, he should conclude the vow by feeding the brāhmaṇas.

“If one is unable to offer a lamp, he should light the lamps that others offer, he should carefully protect others’ lamps from winds or other disturbances.

“If there is no Tulasī plant, one should worship a brāhmaṇa-Vaiṣṇava. If no brāhmaṇa-Vaiṣṇava is present, one should serve the brāhmaṇas, cows, bodhi tree, and vaṭa tree to conclude the vow.

Prārthanā-mantraḥ for taking bath

tava dhyānena deveśa
jale ‘smin snātum udyataḥ
tvat-prasādāc ce me pāpaṁ
dāmodara vinaśyatu

“O master of the demigods, rapt in meditation on You, I am about to take my bath. O Lord Dāmodara, by Your grace may all my sins be destroyed.”

Atha arghya-mantraḥ

vratinaḥ kārttike māsi
snātasya vidhivan mama
dāmodara gṛhāṇārghyaṁ
danujendra-nisūdana

"O Lord Dāmodara, O killer of the kings of the demons, please accept this arghya that I, who have bathed and who follow this vow, properly offer to You.

nitye naimittike kṛtsne
kārttike pāpa-śoṣaṇe
gṛhāṇārghyaṁ mayā dattaṁ
rādhayā sahito hare

"O Lord Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Goddess Rādhā, please accept this arghya I offer to You. May the regular and occasional duties I perform during this month of Kārttika dry up all my sins."

Then one should anoint his body with oil, chant the Lord's holy names, bathe, properly chant the gāyatrī mantra, and then return home.

Then, after anointing and making a svastika, one should worship the Deity with Tulasī and with mālatī, lotus, agastya, and other flowers.

In the company of the Vaiṣṇavas one should regularly serve the words glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Day and night a lamp of ghee or sesame oil should be used to worship the Lord.

One should place offerings of food before the Lord, worship the Lord, and bow down before Him. In this way as far as one is able one should follow this vow of being devoted to the Lord alone.

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"Early in the morning one should rise, go to a body of water, properly bathe, and then worship Lord Dāmodara.

"One who follows the Kārttika vow should take his meals in silence. He should offer a lamp of ghee or sesame oil.

"To keep the vow he made with the saṅkalpa mantra he should pass his days talking of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the company of the devotees.

"Beginning in the month of Aśvina, either on the śukla-ekādaśī, or on the full moon day, or on the tula-saṅkranti day, he should offer a lamp to Lord Viṣṇu in the temple, or he should offer the lamp to Tulasī-devī, or to the sky."

"During the month of Kārttika a person should offer silver, gold, lamps, jewels, pearls, and other valuables to please Lord Dāmodara."

In the Skanda Purāṇa, Śrī Rukmāṅgada tells Śrī Mohinī:

"O goddess, one should not follow the Kārttika vow at home. One should go to a holy place and follow it there very carefully."

What Should Be Avoided During the Month of Kārttika

In the Skanda Purāṇa, in a conversation of Brahma' and Nārada, it is said: "O tiger of sages, a person who during the month of Kārttika eats rājamāṣa beans or kidney beans becomes a resident of hell.

"A person who during the month of Kārttika does not avoid eating kaliṅga, paṭola, eggplant, and pickles becomes a resident of hell.

"During the month of Kārttika a religious person will carefully avoid eating fish, rabbit, pork, or any kind of flesh."

"During the month of Kārttika an intelligent person should stay away from sumptuous food, comfortable bed, prostitutes, and other's wives.

"A person who properly follows the Kārttika vow should avoid being anointed with oil, eating sumptuous food, sleeping in a comfortable bed, and eating from a bell-metal plate.

"A person who avoids sumptuous food during the month of Kārttika attains every day the benefit of having performed severe austerities."

Śrī Rukmāṅgada tells Śrī Mohinī:

"During Kārttika one should avoid oil. During Kārttika one should avoid wine. During Kārttika one should avoid bell-metal. During Kārttika one should avoid food that is not fresh.

"O girl with the beautiful eyebrows, one should not eat fish, turtle, or any other kind of flesh. By eating meat during the month of Kārttika one becomes an outcaste.

Worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"Because She is the gopī most dear to Lord Viṣṇu, Śrī Rādha' should be worshiped along with Lord Dāmodara during the month of Kārttika.

"Dressing Lord Dāmodara as a brāhmaṇa and Śrī Rādha' as His wife, one should worship them with nice garments, ornaments, and foods during the month of Kārttika.

"O brāhmaṇas, during the month of Kārttika one should worship the Deity of Śrī Rādhā. To please Śrī Rādhā, Lord Dāmodara, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will be pleased with that worshiper."

One should regularly recite the prayer called Dāmodarāṣṭaka, which was spoken by Satyavrata, which attracts Lord Dāmodara, and which describes the worship of Lord Dāmodara.

Offering lamp for Yamarāja

In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

"When on the Kṛṣṇa-trayodaśī of the month of Kārttika a person places a lamp for Yamarāja outside, then the danger of his untimely death is at once destroyed.

Atha tatra mantraḥ

mṛtyunā pāśa-daṇḍābhyāṁ
kālaḥ śyāmalayā saha
trayodaśyāṁ dīpa-dānāt
sūryajaḥ priyatām

The Mantra For That:

"With this offering of a lamp on the Kṛṣṇa-trayodaśī day, may Lord Yamarāja, who is the son of the sun-god, who is time personified, who is accompanied by Goddess Durgā, and who carries with him a noose, a rod, and death itself, be pleased with me.

PADMA PURANA ON KARTIKA VRATA

quoted by Srila Sanatana Gosvami in his Hari-bhakti Vilasa (the standard lawbook for all Gaudiya Vaisnavas)

Intro-

if one neglects to perform the Kartika Vrata all his pious merits amassed in the passed are burned to ashes; his study of the Vedas becomes futile; and his performance of japa, charity, and austerity becomes fruitless.

Glories of Kartika Vrata-

Kartik is the best, the purest of purifiers, and most glorious of all months. Kartika month is particularly dear to Lord Sri Krsna. This month is full of bhakta vatsalya. Any vrata, even the smallest, will yield huge results. The effect of performing a Kartika Vrata lasts for one hundred lifetimes, whereas ordinary vratas only last for one lifetime! As Krsna says in Gita that He is the month of Nov-Dev, similarly, Srimati Radhika is the holy month of Kartik which precedes His month. Rupa Gosvami and others refer to Radharani as the Kartika-devata or Kartika Devi, in other words, Radhika is the goddess or presiding Deity of the Kartika Vrata.

Daily Offer-

tulsi arotik, ghee lamp to Krsna and sing Damodarastakam, bathe in Yamuna if possible, give charity to pure devotees.

Dont Eat:

grains given by others, honey, sesame seeds, oils, hing, eggplant, loki, tasty foods like sweets and fried foods, samosas, pakoras.

Dont Do:

cut hair, nails, use things of others, criticize Vaisnavas, Vedas or anyone, no oil on body, do not find faults in others or be envious.

Prayer before beginning:

"O gopikas! By your mercy may Radha and Krsna be pleased with my Kartika Vrata."

Benefits Observing Kartik Vrata:

All sins flee from the heart. Performance of other vratas one hundred times not equal to one performance of Kartik Vrata. All the holy places will live within your body. Proper performance of Kartik Vrata gives one a million times the result of chanting mantras, do yatras and other types of vratas. Those who worship Damodara in Vrndavana even once easily attain Krsna bhakti. Dhruva Maharaja attained Hari darsana by worshiping Krsna in Mathura during the Kartika month.

Summary of How to Follow the Kartika Vrata:

Remember--Kartika Vrata is a special time to worship Radha Damodara, and especially get the mercy of Radhika, since it is Her month, and She is very very easily pleased this month if one worships Her along with Her beloved Damodara.

Srila Prabhupada on When to Start Kartika Vrata: "In Vrndavana we should have Kartika Vrata, Urja Vrata, for one month beginning on Ekadasi (Pasanukusa) (Srila Prabhupada Tape 10/6/72)

Pasanukusa Ekadasi Morning: Offer prayer-"O Janardana, O Damodara, O Devesa who are accompanied by Radhika. During the month of Kartika, I will bathe early every morning for Your satisfaction."

1. Rise early every day by Brahma Muhurta, bathe, chant japa offer Mangala Arotik

2. Hear Srimad Bhagavatam, especially Radha and Krsna pastimes in Vrndavana, daily in association of exalted Vaisnavas, if possible. By regularly reading Srimad Bhagavatam during Kartika month, one gets the benefit of reading all the eighteen 18 Puranas. All other duties should be given up in favour of hearing the scriptures from sadhus during this month.

3. Chant continually in japa and kirtan, Krsna nama, do extra rounds and more kirtana with family.

Must maintain celibacy for entire month

Give up favourite food article for entire month (sweets, salties) Try to eat only once in a day. *if you can do and carry on ordinary works*

Eat your meals only on palasa leaves (if possible, will give tremendous punya.)

No oil on body and NO EATING honey, eggplant, portal, pickles, red rajma beans, or sesame seeds, or urad dahl (no kichoris)

Daily sing the Damodarastakam, meditating on meaning

Daily offer a ghee lamp to Krsna Deity or photo

Daily offer arotik and prayers to Tulsi devi praying for eternal residence in Vrndavana and eternal service of the lotus feet of Radha and Krsna.

Daily chant the Radha-krpa katakasam, and Krsna krpa kataksam.

Also chant other prayers to Radha and Radha Krsna Yugala.

On Ekadasi, Dvadasi, and Purnima chant the one-thousand names of Radha

On the three Ekadasis in Kartik try to observe Nirjala Vrata and stay awake chanting hari nam, especially on the last one, Uttana Ekadasi, when Lord Visnu and all the demigods awake after four months slumber.

Donate charity to pure devotees

Offer special nice foods to Krsna for entire month. For example every day make sweet rice,(khira) which is the favorite food of Krsna.

12

Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭaka

(Eight verses in Praise of Lord Kṛṣṇa in His form as Dāmodara)
by Śrī Satyavrata Muni

namāmīśvaraṁ sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ
lasat-kuṇḍalaṁ gokule bhrājamānam
yaśodā-bhiyolūkhalād dhāvamānaṁ
parāmṛṣṭam atyantato drutya gopyā

To the supreme controller who possesses an eternal form of blissful knowledge, whose glistening earrings swing to and fro, who manifested Himself in Gokula, who stole the butter that the *gopīs* kept hanging from the rafters of their storerooms and who then quickly jumped up and ran in retreat in fear of Mother Yaśodā but was ultimately caught—to that Supreme Lord, Śrī Dāmodara, I offer my humble obeisances.

rudantaṁ muhur netra-yugmaṁ mṛjantaṁ
karāmbhoja-yugmena sātaṅka-netram
muhuḥ śvāsa-kampa-trirekhāṅka-kaṇṭha-
sthita-graiva-dāmodaraṁ bhakti-baddham

Upon seeing His mother's whipping stick, He cried and rubbed His eyes again and again with His two lotus hands. His eyes were fearful and His breathing quick, and as Mother Yaśodā bound His belly with ropes, He shivered in fright and His pearl necklace shook. To this Supreme Lord, Śrī Dāmodara, who is bound with His devotee's love, I offer my humble obeisances.

itīdṛk sva-līlābhir ānanda-kuṇḍe
sva-ghoṣaṁ nimajjantam ākhyāpayantam
tadīyeśita-jñeṣu bhaktair jitatvaṁ
punaḥ prematas taṁ śatāvṛtti vande

Those superexcellent pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s babyhood drowned the inhabitants of Gokula in pools of ecstasy. To the devotees who are attracted only to His majestic aspect of Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord herein reveals: “I am conquered and overwhelmed by pure loving devotion.” To the Supreme Lord Dāmodara, my obeisances hundreds and hundreds of times.

varaṁ deva mokṣaṁ na mokṣāvadhiṁ vā
na cānyaṁ vṛṇe ’haṁ vareśād apīha
idaṁ te vapur nātha gopāla-bālaṁ
sadā me manasy āvirāstāṁ kim anyaiḥ

O Lord, although You are able to give all kinds of benedictions, I do not pray to You for liberation, nor eternal life in Vaikuṇṭha, nor any other boon. My only prayer is that Your childhood pastimes may constantly appear in my mind. O Lord, I do not even want to know Your feature of Paramātmā. I simply wish that Your childhood pastimes may ever be enacted in my heart.

idaṁ te mukhāmbhojam atyanta-nīlair
vṛtaṁ kuntalaiḥ snigdha-raktaiś ca gopyā
muhuś cumbitaṁ bimba-raktā-dharaṁ me
manasy āvirāstām alaṁ lakṣa-lābhaiḥ

O Lord, the cheeks of Your blackish lotus face, which is encircled by locks of curling hair, have become reddened like bimba fruit due to Mother Yaśodā’s kisses. What more can I describe than this? Millions of opulences are of no use to me, but may this vision constantly remain in my mind.

namo deva dāmodarānanta viṣṇo
prasīda prabho duḥkha-jālābdhi-magnam
kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyātidīnaṁ batānu-
gṛhāṇeśa mām ajñam edhy akṣi-dṛśyaḥ

O unlimited Viṣṇu! O master! O Lord! Be pleased upon me! I am drowning in an ocean of sorrow and am almost like a dead man. Please shower the rain of mercy on me; uplift me and protect me with Your nectarean vision.

kuverātmajau baddha-mūrtyaiva yadvat
tvayā mocitau bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca
tathā prema-bhaktiṁ svakāṁ me prayaccha
na mokṣe graho me 'sti dāmodareha

O Lord Dāmodara, in Your form as a baby Mother Yaśodā bound You to a grinding stone with a rope for tying cows. You then freed the sons of Kuvera, Maṇigrīva and Nalakūvara, who were cursed to stand as trees, and You gave them the chance to become Your devotees. Please bless me in this same way. I have no desire for liberation into Your effulgence.

namas te 'stu dāmne sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne
tvadīyodarāyātha viśvasya dhāmne
namo rādhikāyai tvadīya-priyāyai
namo 'nanta-līlāya devāya tubhyam

O Lord, the entire universe was created by Lord Brahmā, who was born from Your abdomen, which was bound with a rope by Mother Yaśodā. To this rope I offer my humble obeisances. I offer my obeisances to Your most beloved Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and to Your unlimited pastimes.

13

Śrī-Dāmodarāṣṭakam

With Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

namāmīśvaraṁ sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ
lasat-kuṇḍalaṁ gokule bhrājamānam
yaśodā-bhiyolūkhalād dhāvamānaṁ
parāmṛṣṭam atyantato drutya gopyā (1)

namāmi-I offer my respectful obeisances; īśvaram-to the Supreme Personality of Godhead; sā-cid-ānanda-rūpam-whose form is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss; lasat-kuṇḍalam-with glistening earrings; gokule-in Gokula; bhrājamānam-splendidly manifested; yaśodā-by Yaśodā; bhiyā-with fear; ulūkhalāt-from the wooden mortar; dhāvamānam-fleeing; para-greatly; āmṛṣṭam-caught; atyantataḥ-greatly; drutya-quickly; gopyā-by the gopī.

"I offer my humble obeisances to the Supreme Controller, who possesses an eternal form of blissful knowledge, whose earrings glisten, who manifested Himself in Gokula, who ran from the wooden mortar in fear of Mother Yaśoda' but was ultimately caught, . . .

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Offering my respectful obeisances to Śrī Śrī Rādha'-Dāmodara, I will now comment on the Dāmodarāṣṭaka. In the beginning of this prayer the author offers his respectful obeisances as with devotion he describes the great treasure that is the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which was manifested in Gokula, and which is glorious with the most excellent handsomeness, pastimes, virtues, and other qualities. What is the Supreme Personality of Godhead like? He is "Īśvara", which means "all-powerful", "the master of the universes", or "my master". His form is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss. He is handsome and attractive. The gopīs describe His handsomeness in these words (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.29.40,:

trailokya-saubhagam idaṁ ca nirīkṣya rūpaṁ
yad go-dvija-druma-mṛgāḥ pulakāny abibhran

"O Kṛṣṇa, even the cows, birds, trees, and deer become stunned in ecstasy when they gaze at Your form, the most handsome in all the three worlds." Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.2.12, again explains:

vismāpanaṁ svasya ca saubhagarddheḥ
paraṁ padaṁ bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣānāṅgam

"The Lord appeared in this mortal world by His internal potency, yogamāyā. He came in His eternal form, which is just suitable for His pastimes. These pastimes were wonderful for everyone, even for those proud of their own opulence, including the Lord Hismelf as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha. Thus His (Śrī Kṛṣṇa's, transcendental body is the ornament of all ornaments." Lord Kṛṣṇa's alkl-attractuve form was splendidly manifest in Gokyla, where many cows, gopas, and gopīs lived. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.32.14, explains:

cakāsa gopī-pariṣad-gato 'rcitas
trailokya-lakṣmy-eka-padaṁ vapur dadhat

"Worshiped by the gopīs, Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental form, the only home of all glory and handsomeness in the three worlds, was splendidly manifest." The specifi pastime described in this verse of Dāmodarāṣṭaka, where Lord Kṛṣṇa broke the yogurt pot and fled in fear of Mother Yaśodā, is described these words of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.8-9):

ulūkhalaṅghrer upari vyavasthitaṁ
markāya kāmaṁ dadataṁ śici sthitam
haiyaṅgavaṁ caurya-viśaṅkitekṣaṇaṁ
nirīkṣya paścāt sutam āgamā chanaiḥ

"Kṛṣṇa, at that time, was sitting on an upside-down wooden mortar for grinding spices and was distributing milk preparations, such as yogurt and butter, to the monkeys as he liked. Because of having stolen He was looking all around with great anxiety, suspecting that He might be chastised by His mother. Mother Yaśodā, upon seeing HIm, very cautiously approached Him from behind.

tām ātta-yaṣṭiṁ prasamīkṣya sa-tvaras
tato 'varuhyāpasāra bhītavat
gopy anvadhāvan na yam āpa yogināṁ
kṣamaṁ praveṣṭuṁ tapaseritaṁ manaḥ

"When Lord Kṛṣṇa saw His mother, stick in hand, He very quickly got down from the top of the mortar and began to flee as if very much afraid. Although yogīs try to capture Him as Paramātma' by meditation, desiring to enter into the effulgence of the Lord with great austerities and penances, they fail to reach Him. But Mother Yaśodā, thinking that same Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, to be her son, began following Kṛṣṇa to catch Him." Then Mother Yaśoda' chased Lord Kṛṣṇa and caught Him from behind. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.10, explains:

avañcamānā jananī bṛhac-calac-
chroṇi-bharākrānta-gatiḥ su-madhyamā
javena visraṁsita-keśa-bandhana-
cyuta-prasūnānugatiḥ parāmṛśat

"While following Kṛṣṇa, Mother Yaśodā, her thin waist overburdened by her heavy breasts, naturally had to reduce her speed. Because of following Kṛṣṇa very swiftly, her hair became loose, and the flowers in her hair were falling after her. Yet she did not fail to capture her son Kṛṣṇa."

rudantaṁ muhur netra-yugmaṁ mṛjantaṁ
karāmbhoja-yugmena sātāṅka-netram
muhuḥ śvāsa-kampa-trirekhāṅka-kaṇṭha-
sthita-graiva-dāmodaraṁ bhakti-baddham (2)

rudantaṁ-crying; muhuḥ-again and again; netra-yugmam-two eyes; mṛjantam-rubbing; karāmbhoja-yugmena-with two lotus hands; sa-with; ātāṅka-fear; netram-eyes; muhuḥ-again and again; śvāsa-breathing; kampa-trembling; tri-three; rekhā-lines; aṅka-marked; kaṇṭha-neck; sthita-situated; graiva-necklaces; dāmodaram-Lord Kṛṣṇa; bhakti-with devotion; baddham-bound.

". . . who cried and rubbed His frightened eyes again and again with His two lotus hands, whose necklace on His three-lined neck trembled as He breathed again and again, whose waist was surrounded by a rope, and who was finally bound by love."

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

This pastime is described in the following words (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.11):

kṛtāgasaṁ taṁ prarudantam akṣiṇī
kaṣantam añjan-maṣini sva-pāṇinā
udvīkṣamānaṁ bhaya-vihvalekṣaṇaṁ
haste gṛhītva bhiṣayanty avāgurat

"When caught by Mother Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa became more and more afraid and admitted to being an offender. As she looked upon Him, she saw that He was crying, His tears mixing with the black ointment around His eyes, and as He rubbed His eyes with His hands, He smeared the ointment all over His face. Mother Yaśodā, catching her beautiful son by the hand, mildly began to chastise Him." Mother Yaśoda' then bound Him with a rope. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.14, explains:

gopikolūlukhe dāmnā
babandha prākṛtaṁ yathā

"Mother Yaśodā, considering Kṛṣṇa her own ordinary child, bound Him to the wooden mortar with a rope."

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.18-21, continues:

sva-mātuḥ svinna-gātṛaya
visrasta-kabara-srajaḥ
dṛṣṭvā pariśramaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ
kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane

"Because of Mother Yaśodā's hard labor, her whole body became covered with perspiration, and the flowers and comâ were falling from her hair. When child Kṛṣṇa saw His mother thus fatigued, He became merciful to her and agreed to be bound.*

evam sandarśitā hy aṅga
hariṇā bhṛtya-vaśyatā
sva-vaśenāpi kṛṣṇena
yasyedaṁ seśvaraṁ vaśe

"O Mahārāja Parīkṣit, this entire universe, with its great exalted demigods like Lord Śiva, Lord Brahmā, and Lord Indra, is under the control of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Yet the Supreme Lord has one transcendental attribute: He comes under the control of His devotees. This was now exhibited by Kṛṣṇa in this pastime.

nemaṁ viriñco na bhavo
na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā
prasādaṁ lebhire gopī
yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt

"Neither Lord Brahmā, nor Lord Śiva, nor even the goddess of fortune, who is always the better half of the Supreme Lord, can obtain from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the deliverer from this material world, such mercy as received by Mother Yaśodā.

nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān
dehināṁ gopikā-sutaḥ
jñānināṁ cātma-bhūtānāṁ
yathā bhaktimatām iha

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the son of Mother Yaśodā, is accessible to devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not as easily accessible to mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self."*

itīdṛk-sva-līlābhir ānanda-kuṇḍe
sva-ghoṣaṁ nimajjantam ākhyāpayantam
tadīyeśita-jñeṣu bhaktair jitatvaṁ
punaḥ prematas taṁ śatāvṛtti vande (3)

itīdṛk-like this; sva-own; līlābhiḥ-with pastimes; ānanda-of bliss; kuṇḍe-in a lake; sva-own; ghoṣam-cowherd village; nimajjantam-plunging; ākhyāpayantam-declaring; tadīya-own; īśita-supremacy; jñeṣu-among they who know; bhaktaiḥ-by the devotees; jitatvam-the state of being defeated; punaḥ-again and again; prematạḥ-out of love; tam-to Him; śata-a hundred; āvṛtti-repetitions; vande-I offer my respectful obeisances.

"A hundred times I bow down before Lord Kṛṣṇa, who with pastimes like these plunges His own cowherd village of Vraja in pools of ecstasy, and who declares to they who know Him only as the supreme master and controller: I am conquered by My loving devotees."

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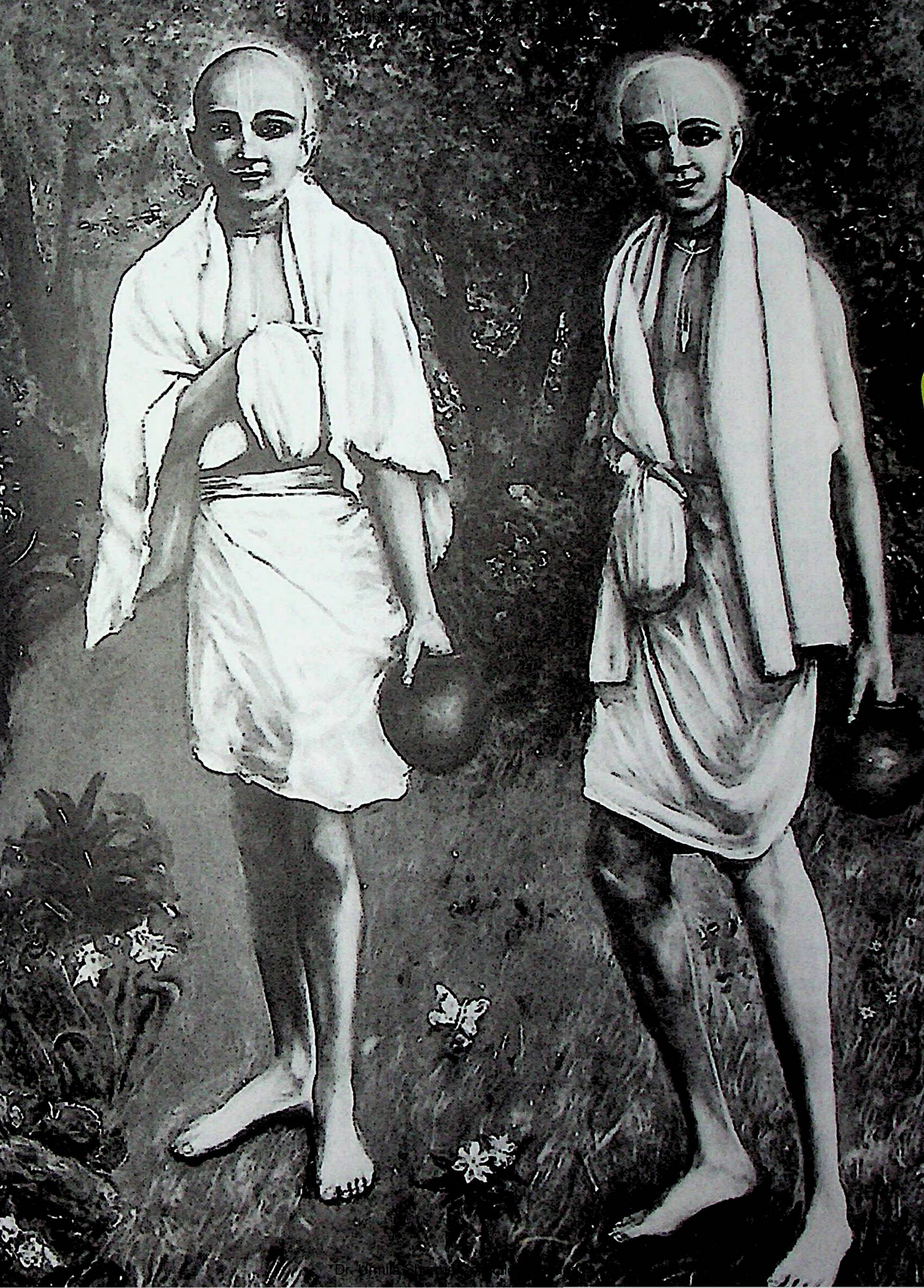


Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

That Lord Kṛṣṇa is controlled by the love of His devotees is described in the following words of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.11.7-8):

gopībhiḥ stobhito 'nṛtyad
bhagavān bālavat kvacit
udgāyati kvacin mugdhas
tad-vaśo dāru-yantravat

"The gopīs would say: 'If You dance, my dear Kṛṣṇa, then I shall give You half a sweetmeat.' By saying these words or by clapping their hands, all the gopīs encouraged Kṛṣṇa in different ways. At such times, although He was the supremely powerful Personality of Godhead, he would smile and dance according to their desire, as if He were a wooden doll in their hands. Sometimes he would sing very loudly, at their bidding. In this way Kṛṣṇa came completely under the control of the gopīs.*

bibharti kvacid ajñāptaḥ
pīṭhakonmāna-pādukam
bahu-kṣepaṁ ca kurute
svānāṁ ca prītim āvahan

"Sometimes Mother Yaśoda' and her gopī friends would tell Kṛṣṇa, 'Bring this article' or 'Bring that article.' Sometimes they would order Him to bring a wooden plank, wooden shoes, or a wooden measuring pot, and Kṛṣṇa, when thus ordered by the mothers, would try to bring them. Sometimes, however, as if unable to raise these things, He would touch them and stand there. Just to invite the pleasure of his relatives, He would strike His body with His arms to show that He had sufficient strength." Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.11.9, again says:

darśayaṁs tad-vidāṁ loka
ātmano bhṛtya-vaśyatām

"To pure devotees throughout the world who could understand His activities, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, exhibited how much He can be subdued by His devotees, His servants."*

varaṁ deva mokṣaṁ na mokṣāvadhiṁ vā
na cānyaṁ vṛṇe 'haṁ vareśād apīha
idaṁ te vapur nātha gopāla-bālaṁ
sadā me manasy āvirāstāṁ kim anyaiḥ (4)

varam-benediction; deva-O Lord; mokṣam-liberation; na-not; mokṣa-liberation; āvadhim-highest limit; vā-or; na-not; ca-and; anyam-another thing; vṛṇe-choose; aham-I; vara-of benedictions; īśāt-from the master; api-even; iha-here; idam-this; te-of You; vapuḥ-the form; nātha-O master; gopāla-bālam-a cowherd boy; sadā-always; me-of me; manasi-in the mind; āvirāstām-may be manifested; kim-what is the use?; anyaiḥ-of other things.

"O Lord, I do not ask for liberation, something better than liberation, or any other thing. O Lord, all I ask from You, the master of all blessings, is that Your form as a cowherd boy always be manifest in my heart. What need have I for any other blessing?

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

The thing better that liberation here is residence in Vaikuṇṭhaloka. Better than impersonal liberation is residence in Vaikuṇṭhaloka, and better than residence in Vaikuṇṭhaloka is pure devotional service, which begins with hearing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. That pure devotional service is better than residence in Vaikuṇṭhaloka is described in the following words (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.15.49):

"O Lord, we pray that You let us be born in any hellish condition of life, just as long as our hearts and minds are always engaged in the service of Your lotus feet, our words are made beautiful by speaking of Your activities just as tulasī leaves are beautified when offered unto Your lotus feet, and as long as our ears are always filled with the chanting of Your transcendental qualities."

idaṁ te mukhāmbhojam atyanta-nīlair
vṛtaṁ kuntalaiḥ sṅgdha-raktaiś ca gopyā
muhuś cumbitaṁ bimba-raktādharaṁ me
manasy āvirāstām alaṁ lakṣa-lābhaiḥ(5)

idam-this; te-of You; mukha-face; ambhojam-lotus; atyanta-nīlaiḥ-very dark; vṛtam-covered; kuntalaiḥ-with hairs; snigdha-glistening; raktaiḥ-red; ca-and; gopyā-by the gopī; muhuḥ-again and again; cumbitam-kissed; bimba-bimba fruit; rakta-red; adharam-lips; me-of me; manasi-in the heart; āvirāstām-may be manifested; alam-what is the need; lakṣa-of a hundred thousand; lābhaiḥ-attainments.

"May Your lotus face, decorated with glistening locks of hair and with bimba-fruit lips again and again kissed by the gopī Yaśodā, always be manifest in my heart. What need have I for a hundred thousand other blessings?

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Lord Kṛṣṇa's face is like a blossoming lotus flower. It is blissful and the sight of it removes all sufferings.

namo deva dāmodarānanta viṣṇo
prasīda prabho duḥkha-jalābdhi-magnam
kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyāti-dīnaṁ batānu-
gṛhāṇeśa mām ajñam edhy akṣi-dṛśyaḥ(6)

namaḥ-obeisances; deva-O Lord; dāmodara-O Dāmodara; ananta-unlimited; viṣṇaḥ-O Viṣṇu; prasīda-please be merciful; prabhaḥ-O master; duḥkha-of torments; jalābdhi-in an ocean; magnam-drowning; kṛpā-of mercy; dṛṣṭi-glance; vṛṣṭyā-with a shower; ati-very; dīnam-poor; bata-indeed; anugṛhāṇa-please be kind; īśa-O Lord; mām-to me; ajñam-foolish; edhi-please come; akṣi-by the eyes; dṛśyaḥ-visible.

"O unlimited, all-pervading Lord whose belly was bound by a rope, I bow down before You. O master, please be kind to me, who am now drowning in an ocean of sufferings. Please shower Your glance of mercy on me, who am very poor, wretched, and foolish. O master, please come before my eyes.

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Here the author says that he is so distressed that he is on the verge of death. He is like a living corpse. He says: "Please be kind to me! Please rescue me! Please restore my life!"

Here the word "prabho" (O master, means "O master of great, inconceivable, limitless, wonderful potencies!" This shows that the Lord's potencies cannot be understood by the material senses. The word "īśa" (O master, means "O supremely independent one!" This shows that the Lord can do as He likes, and therefore He can bestow His mercy even on a person who is not really worthy to receive it. The word "viṣṇo" means "O all-pervading one!" or it also means "O Lord who stays in Vṛndāvana!"

kuverātmajau baddha-mūrtyaiva yadvat
tvayā mocitau bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca
tathā prema-bhaktiṁ svakāṁ me prayaccha
na mokṣe graho me 'sti dāmodareha (7)

kuverātmajau-the two sons of Kuvera; baddha-bound; mūrtyā-by the form;

eva-indeed; yadvat-as; tvayā-by You; mocitau-freed; bhakti-bhājau-devotees; kṛtau-made; ca-and; tathā-so; prema-bhaktim-love and devotion; svakām-own; me-to me; prayaccha-please give; na-not; mokṣe-in liberation; grahaḥ-acceptance; me-of me; asti-is; dāmodara-O Lord Dāmodara; iha-here.

"Even though You were tied up, You still freed Kuvera's two sons and made them devoted to You. Please give to me love and devotion as You gave it to them. O Lord Dāmodara, I will not accept impersonal liberation.

Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Here, rejecting impersonal liberation, the author prays for pure devotional service. Even though, as part of His beautiful pastimes, the Lord Himself was tied up by the gopī Yaśodā, He was able to free the sons of Kuvera. Giving them the gift of pure devotional service, He said to them (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.10.42): "O Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva, now you may both return home. Since you desire to be always absorbed in My devotional service, your desire to develop love and affection for Me will be fulfilled, and now you will never fall from that platform."

namas te 'stu dhāmne sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne
tvadīyodarāyātha viśvasya dhāmne
namo rādhikāyai tvadīya-priyāyai
namo 'nanta-līlāya devāya tubhyam(8)

namaḥ-obeisances; te-of You; astu-may be; dhāmne-to the rope; sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne-splendid; tvadīya-to You; udarāya-abdomen; atha-then; viśvasya-of the universe; dhāmne-the resting place; namaḥ-obeisances; rādhikāyai-to Śrī Rādhā; tvadīya-priyāyai-dear to You; namaḥ-obeisances; ananta-unlimited; līlāya-whose pastimes; devāya-to the Lord; tubhyam-to You.

"Obeisances to Your rope, the abode of great splendor! Obeisances to Your belly, the resting-place of the universe! Obeisances to Your beloved, Śrī Rādhā! Obeisances to You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose pastimes have no end!"

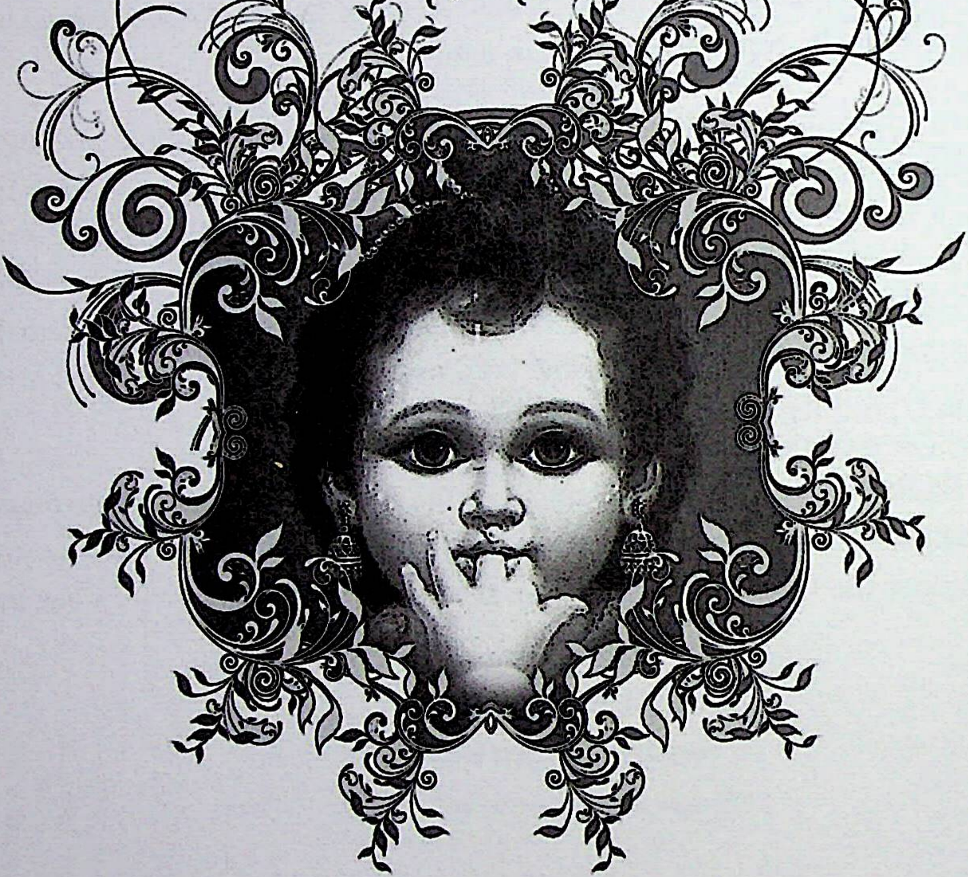
Commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Here the word "dhāmne" means "the great rope that was tied around Your belly". What was that rope like? It is described here as "the abode of splendor". That means the rope was spiritual in nature.

Next the author says, "Obeisances to Your belly!" What is the Lord's belly like? It is the resting place of the universe, where the moving and unmoving beings live. This is so because from it sprouted the lotus flower that is the home of the fourteen worlds. By tying a rope around this belly, Mother Yaśoda' showed that she had the entire universe under her control. Actually no one has the power to tie up the Lord in that way, but out of love for His mother, Lord Kṛṣṇa allowed her to tie Him up.

Śrī Rādha' is the most important of all the gopīs. She is most dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes with Śrī Rādha' have no end. Therefore the Lord is described here as having pastimes that have no end.

14



Śrī Caurāgragaṇya-puruṣāṣṭakam

The best of all thieves

(This translation is from His Holiness Gaura Govinda Swami's "Mathura meets Vrindavan".)

vraje prasiddhaṁ navanīta-cauraṁ
gopāṅganānāṁ ca dukūla-cauram
aneka-janmārjita-pāpa-cauraṁ
caurāgragaṇyaṁ puruṣaṁ namāmi

I offer my obeisances to that supreme thief, Lord Hari, who is the best of all thieves. He steals the butter from the houses of the damsels of Vraja-bhūmi. He steals all the garments of the damsels of Vraja-bhūmi. He is famous for His acts of stealing. He steals all the sinful reactions of His devotees. Such a great thief! I offer my obeisances to that supreme thief.

śrī-rādhikāyā hṛdayasya cauraṁ
navāmbuda-śyāmala-kānti-cauram
padāśritānāṁ ca samasta-cauraṁ
caurāgragaṇyaṁ puruṣaṁ namāmi

He steals the heart of Rādhārāṇī. He steals the blackish hue of the dark cloud. He steals everything. For those who take shelter at His lotus feet, He steals everything they have. He takes all of their possessions, their material assets, money, and men. He even steals their mind. I offer my obeisances to that great thief, supreme thief.

akiñcanī-kṛtya padāśritaṁ yaḥ
karoti bhikṣuṁ pathi geha-hīnam
kenāpy aho bhīṣaṇa-caura īdṛg
dṛṣṭaḥ śruto vā na jagat-traye 'pi

He takes away everything from those who take shelter at His lotus feet. He takes away their material wealth, their wife, their children, and their kith and kin. He takes everything. Then those persons become paupers, like beggars on the street with no house, no hut, nothing. Such a great thief, who steals away everything. I have not seen or heard of such a great thief, supreme thief, in all the three worlds. I offer my obeisances to that supreme thief.

yadīya nāmāpi haraty aśeṣaṁ
giri-prasārān-api pāpa-rāśīn
āścārya-rūpo nanu caura īdṛg
dṛṣṭaḥ śruto vā na mayā kadāpi

Such a great thief! If one only hears His name He takes away all their sinful reactions. I have never seen or heard of such a wonderful thief! I pay my obeisances to that supreme thief.

dhanaṁ ca mānaṁ ca tathendriyāṇi
prāṇāṁś ca hṛtvā mama sarvam eva
palāyase kutra dhṛto 'dya caura
tvaṁ bhakti-dāmnāsi mayā niruddhaḥ

O great thief! Stealing all of our assets, bank balance, money, land, property, prestige, fame, senses, mind, heart, and everything, You are running away! Where are You running? I will catch hold of You! You are such a great thief, but now You are caught! I will bind You with this rope of love! Where will you go now, great thief, running away and taking everything? You are bound up with this very strong rope of love! You cannot run away now!

chinatsi ghoraṁ yama-pāśa-bandhaṁ
bhinatsi bhīmaṁ bhava-pāśa-bandham
chinatsi sarvasya samasta-bandhaṁ
naivātmano bhakta-kṛtaṁ tu bandham

You may cut off the rope of Yamarāja; You may cut off this material bondage. But You cannot cut this bondage of love. Now You are in bondage. I have bound You up!

man-mānase tāmasa-rāśi-ghore
kārā-gṛhe duḥkha-maye nibaddhaḥ
labhasva he caura! hare! cirāya
sva-caurya-doṣocitam eva daṇḍam

O great thief Lord Hari! I am putting You in the very dark prison house of my heart! This is the right prison for You! I am putting You here forever! This is the proper punishment for Your act of stealing! Stay forever in this prison house of my heart! I'll never release You!

kārā-gṛhe vasa sadā hṛdaye madīye
mad-bhakti-pāśa-dṛḍha-bandhana-niścalaḥ san
tvāṁ kṛṣṇa he! pralaya-koṭi-śatāntare ’pi
sarvasva caura hṛdayān na hi mocayāmi

Now I have bound You with the rope of love and put You in the prison house of my heart! Stay there, stay there, stay there! You cannot get Yourself free from this very tight bondage! O Kṛṣṇa! You have stolen everything from me—my material assets, my name, my fame, my beauty, my reputation, my kith and kin, my family members, my heart, and mind! This is the proper punishment for You, to remain in this prison house of my heart, bound up very tightly with the rope of love, forever and forever! If crores of *pralayas* come, still I won't release You! This is suitable punishment for such a great thief as You!"

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Kārttika
IN MĀYĀPUR

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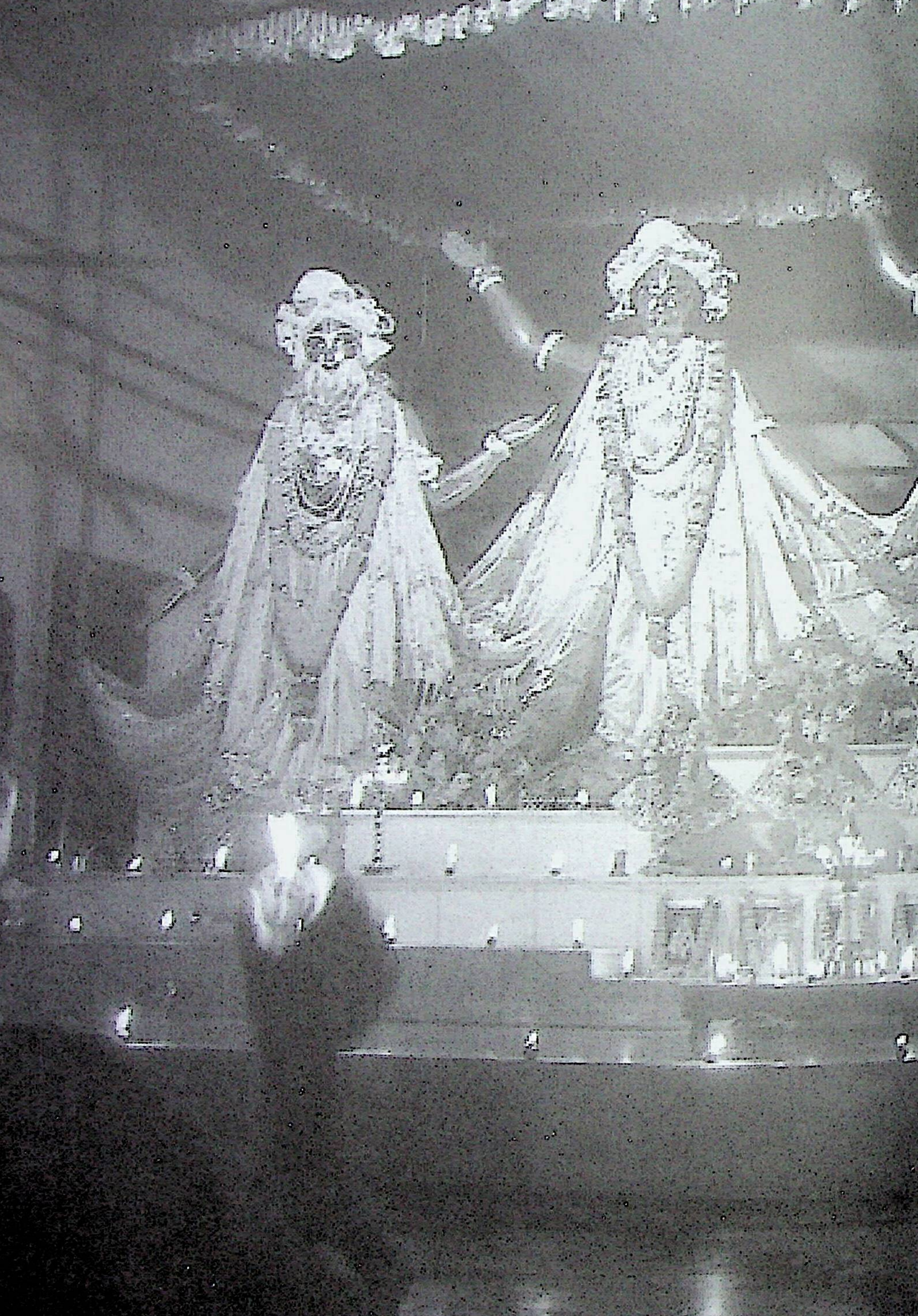

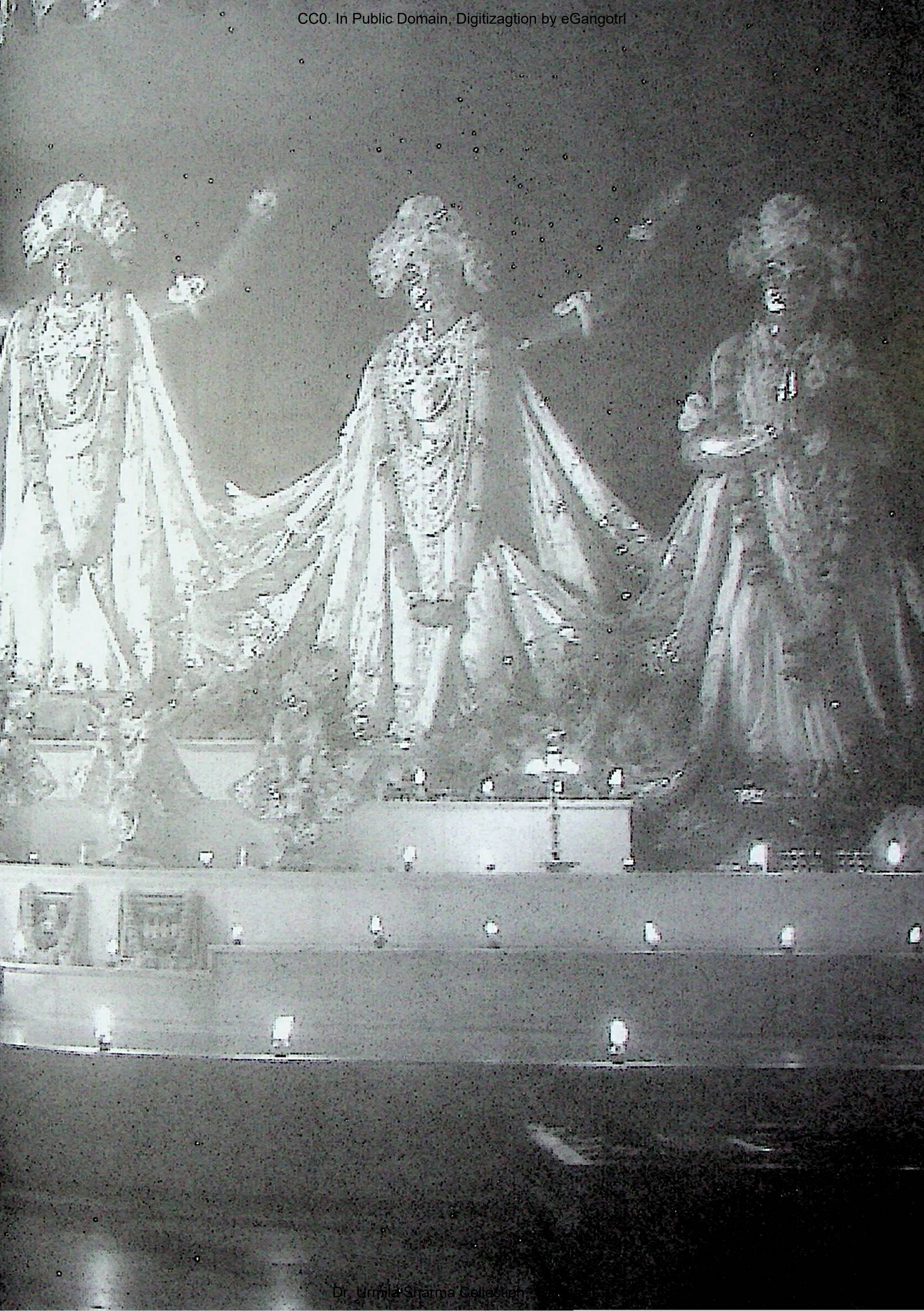

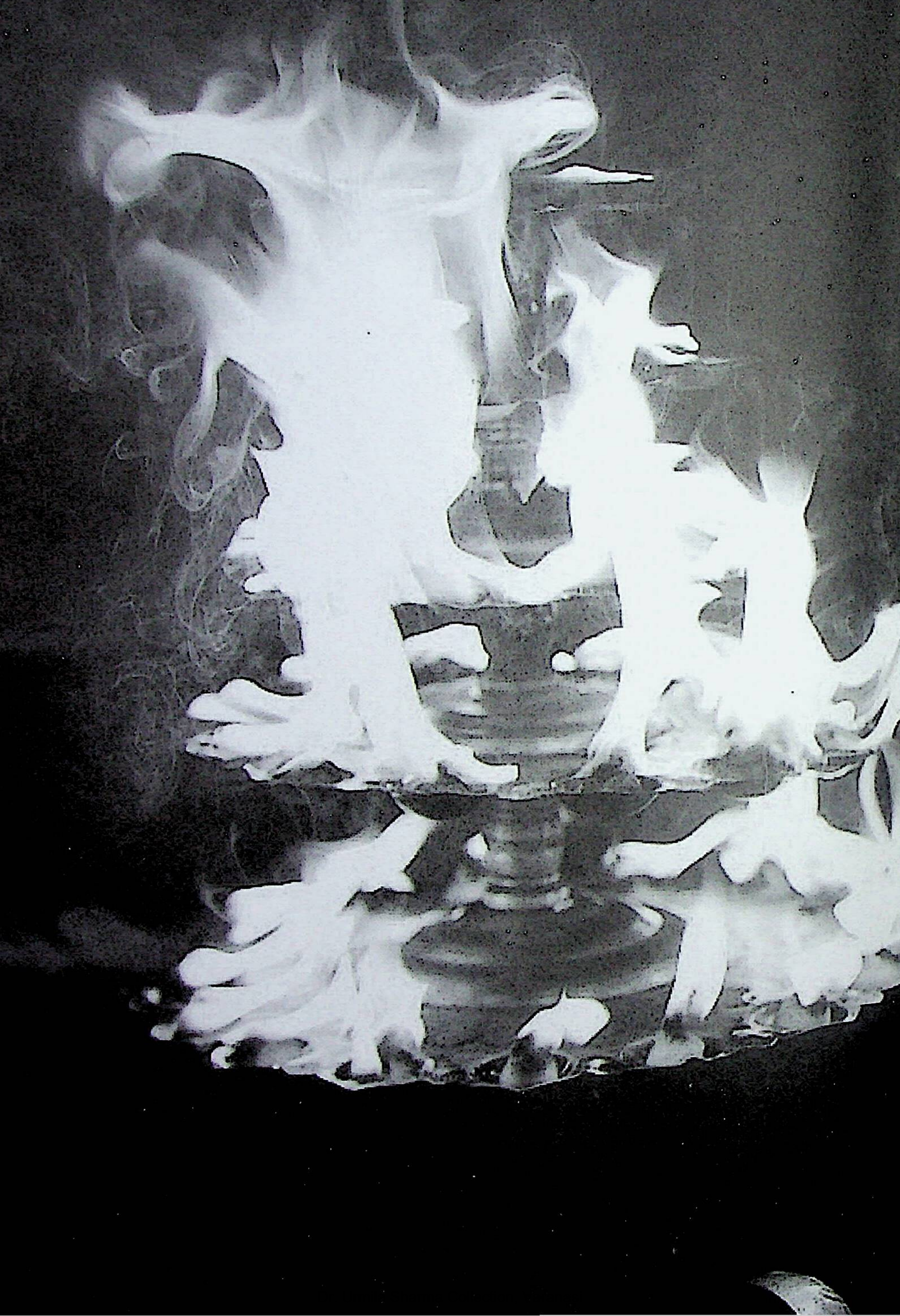

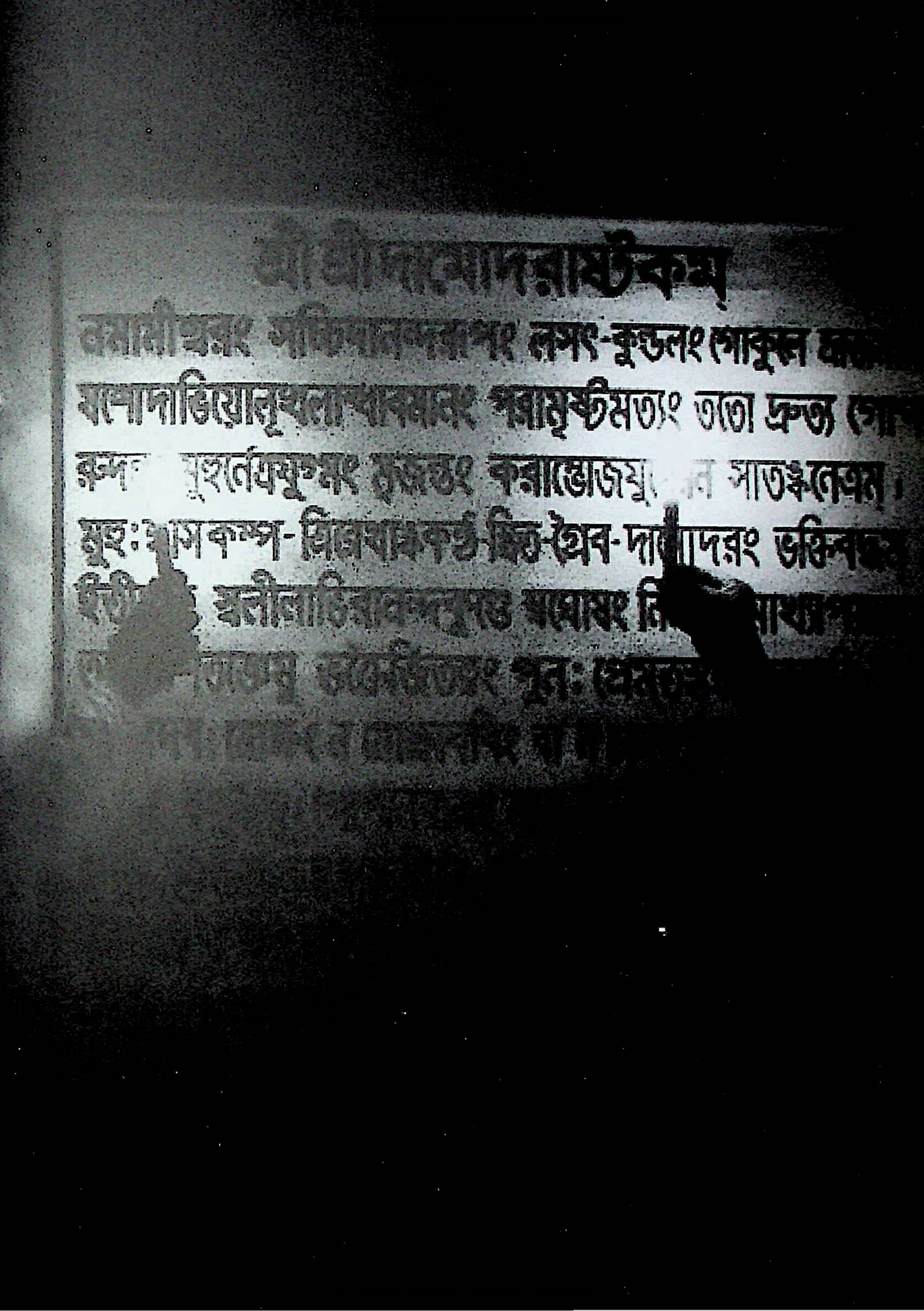

শ্রী শ্রী দামোদরাষ্টকম্

নমামীশ্বরং সচ্চিদানন্দরূপং লসৎ-কুণ্ডলং গোকুলে [illegible]
যশোদাভিয়োলূখলাদ্ধাবমানং পরামৃষ্টমত্যং ততো দ্রুত্য গো
রুদন্ [illegible] মুহুর্নেত্রযুগ্মং মৃজন্তং করাম্ভোজযু[illegible]ন সাতঙ্কনেত্রম্।
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[illegible]েষু ভক্তৈর্জিতত্বং পুনঃ প্রেমত[illegible]
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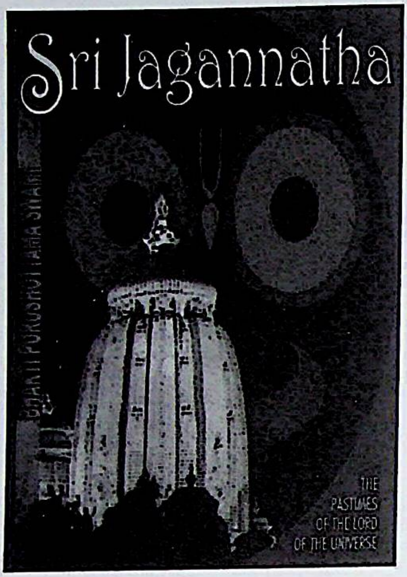
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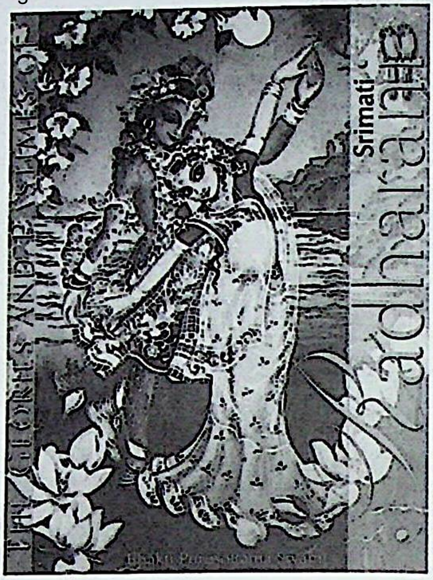
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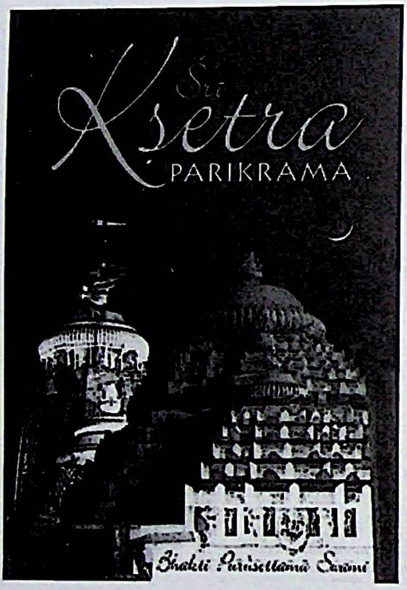
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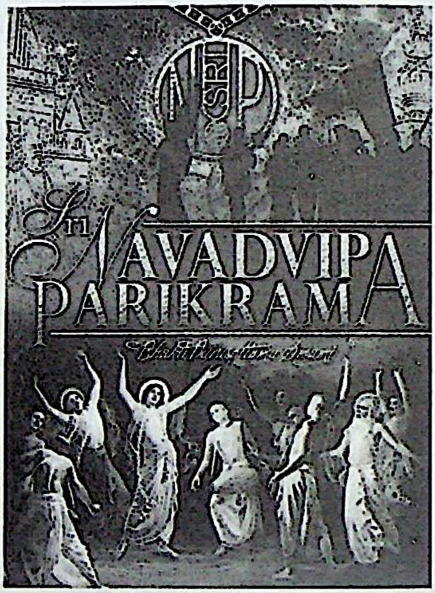
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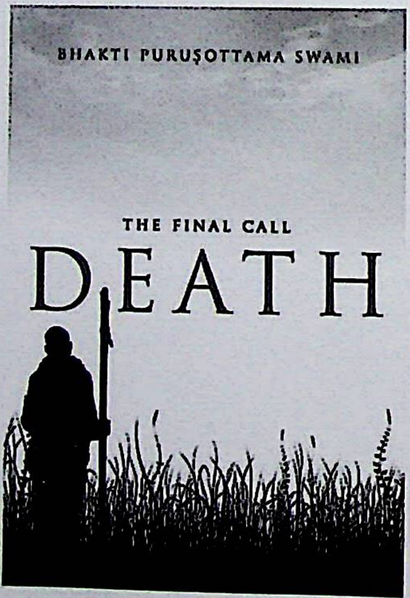
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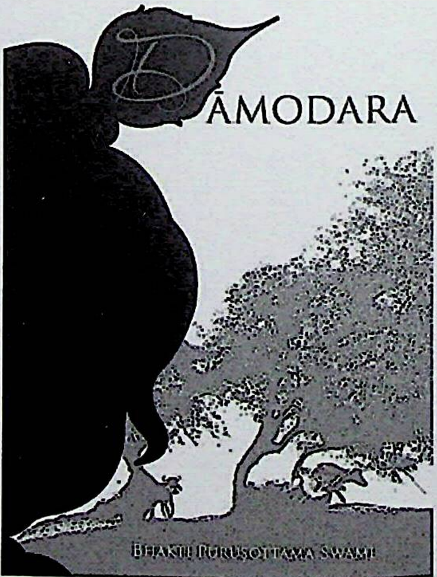
DEATH


DĀMODARA
BHAKTI PURUṢOTTAMA SWAMI

BHAKTI PURUṢOTTAMA

Born in Jagannath Puri in 1957 he became associated with ISKCON while on his second year in college. He joined the society in 1978 and was initiated by His Holiness Jayapataka Swami the following year during the Gaura Purnima festival in Sri Dham Mayapur. From then on he served in various capacities, first as sankirtan leader in Kolkata, then on the boat preaching party in Mayapur. Starting in 1983 he served four years as Temple President in Bhuvaneswar.

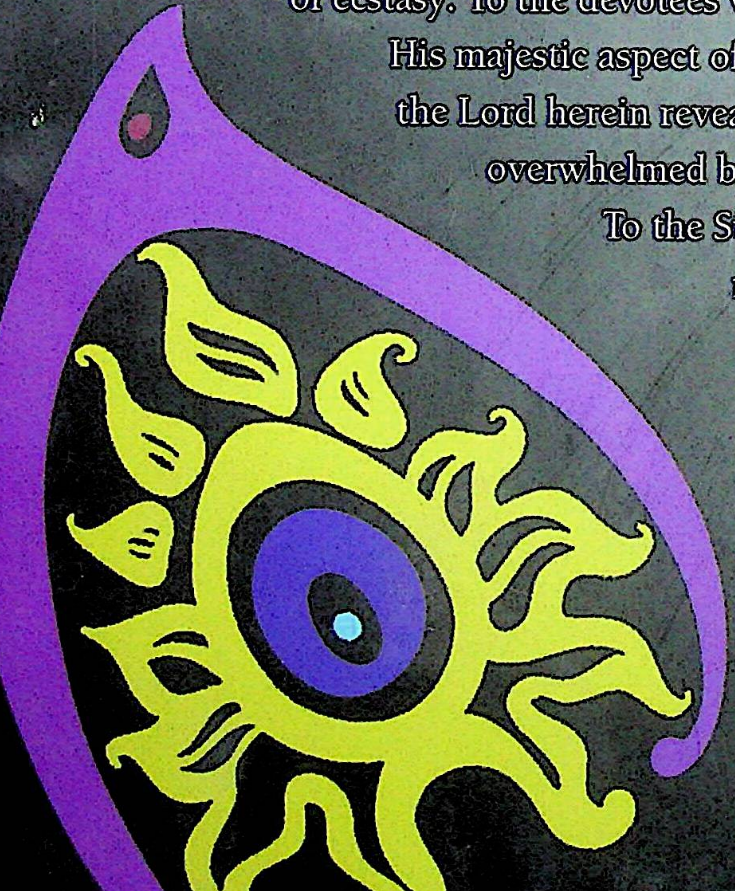
In 1987 he returned to Mayapur to become general manager. Under his supervision the Gita Correspondence-course program, College preaching and book distribution were develop-ed. At present Maharaja is serving in Mayapur as Co-director and one of the GBC members.

Damodara

itīdṛk sva-līlābhir ānanda-kuṇḍe
sva-ghoṣaṁ nimajjantam ākhyāpayantam
tadīyeśita-jñeṣu bhaktair jitatvaṁ
punaḥ prematas taṁ śatāvṛtti vande

Those superexcellent pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa's babyhood drowned the inhabitants of Gokula in pools of ecstasy. To the devotees who are attracted only to His majestic aspect of Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord herein reveals: "I am conquered and overwhelmed by pure loving devotion." To the Supreme Lord Dāmodara, my obeisances hundreds and hundreds of times.

ŚRĪ DĀMODARĀṢṬAKA
by Śrī Satyavrata Muni



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